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A.B. 1901 - M.D. 1905

1931

A STATE SECRET

By B. M. CROKER



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A STATE SECRET

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

B. M. CROKER

Author of "Real Lady Hilda," "Terence," etc.



NEW YORK:

F. M. BUCKLES & COMPANY

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A STATE SECRET.

PART I.

NUMBER Seventy-six, Domnick Street, North Dublin, had undoubtedly seen better days, and was not formerly noticeable for that dirty little card, announcing "Apartments to let," which appeared at fitful intervals in the fanlight over the hall door. But Number Seventy-six, had no reason to give itself lofty airs, or to sulk—and Seventy-six had an undeniably sullen exterior—nor even to pride itself on a stone staircase, mahogany balustrades, and superior fixtures, for some of the mansion's occupants were fully as genteel, and as much "come down in the world," as itself. If Number Seventy-six (in conversing con-

fidentially with Number Seventy-seven) angrily lamented that it had been called upon to open its gates to strangers,—almost as if it were a railway station instead of an aristocratic town residence,—several of its inmates, had never anticipated being the tenants of one of its dignified and dilapidated rooms. Nevertheless, the venerable edifice still endeavored to keep up appearances, and posed as the most "select" lodging-house in the neighborhood. It boasted a brass plate—name long obliterated—a letter-box—much frequented by bills—Venetians in the parlors, drab moreen curtains in the drawing-rooms, and remarkably pretty Liberty muslin blinds in the second floor front. Mrs. Cooney, the landlady, made a capital thing out of her lodgers, thanks to coals, extras, and her cat,—the latter a voracious and elusive creature. The parlors were let to a dancing class, grown-up and noisy; the first floor, to an old maiden lady, fractious, exacting, but permanent. The

second floor front was the home of two Miss Dorans, the twin orphans of a half-pay officer ; they were young and pretty, but friendless, and miserably poor.

Madame Vouvray occupied the back apartment, and hers was a truly squalid bower, where French and Irish ideas of cleanliness made friendly alliance, and found ample scope for exhibition.

The upper story, or garrets, were rented at two-and-sixpence a week respectively, by a tram conductor and a musician, who, when sober, played in the orchestra at the Queen's Theater, and when otherwise, performed frantic fantasias in his own quarters. All the same, he was a marvelous artist—a gutter-born genius.

Mrs. Cooney and suite—which latter consisted of a slavey and a boy—occupied the lower regions, and thus, as will be seen, Number Seventy-six was full from attic to cellar !

Without further introduction, it may be at once announced, that the apartments

which chiefly concern *us*, are on the second floor, front and back. To give the former its undeniable precedence, it is scrupulously neat, cold and bare, and is the residence of the two Miss Dorans; poor girls! they have struggled hard to be together and independent. Their relatives had at first "interested" themselves, and secured a post for Dolly, as companion to an invalid lady,—who subsequently proved to be both insane and violent; whilst Mabel taught in a school fourteen hours a day. But now they had renounced these promising careers, and taken their future into their own hands; consequently, their relatives had washed their hands of them, and all their concerns. Mabel gave music lessons and played at third-class dances, and earned, by sheer hard work, twelve shillings a week,—clear of tram expenses; whilst Dolly remained at home, and trimmed hats and bonnets for a shilling apiece. The pair strove hard to keep up old customs and ladylike surroundings;

they dressed neatly, they went to church, they bought papers, aye, and flowers, and clung to their father's sword and medals, their mother's guitar and watch, a few books and photographs, and played at a pitiful farce called "five o'clock tea"; indeed, they chiefly lived on tea, bread and cheap jams. They had no fire, but then, they had their liberty, and one another.

Madame Vouvray resided in the back room on the same floor as the Misses Doran. She was a little old wizened person, lively, shrill, and fantastic, with the reputation of being "a terrible miser." She had lived on the banks of the Liffey, in flattering preference to those of the Seine, for more than thirty years, and no one knew who she was, from whence she came, or (important item) derived her income, or whether she had a relative in the world? She baffled all inquiries with a nod and a short, cracked laugh, but was extraordinarily eager and successful, in

making herself thoroughly acquainted with other people's business, although so ungraciously reserved concerning her own affairs.

Many were the speculations respecting "Madame." Some suggested that she was a government spy ! Others, that she was a poisoner.—This was ridiculous, for it was well known that Madame would not harm a fly, and contributed regularly to the cats' home.—A few, were quite positive that she was a Socialist and outlaw ; but the most adventurous fancy and wildest guess of all, was that which declared, that she had been a notable beauty, who having seriously embroiled herself in Court intrigues, and State secrets, had been compelled to fly—or die.

Her appearance was decidedly peculiar. She invariably wore an old black lace bonnet, a rather short plaid skirt, neat high-heeled shoes, and a circular velvet cloak, (very rusty,) trimmed with grimy ermine. She carried a satin bag over her

arm, and a fringed parasol, or large blue cotton umbrella, according to the season. Many and many a time has she promenaded up and down the sunny side of Stephen's Green, with smirking face, and mincing gait, positively as if the poor creature still believed that she was fair to see! She may have been a beauty—who can say?—but in her case, beauty was cruel, and had departed, leaving no trace or remains, save a thin little well-cut nose.

Madame's small keen eyes were sunken, her teeth she had not renewed, though she had replaced both hair, and complexion. She wore a ginger-colored wig, and rouged with a bold free hand. In spite of these endeavors to strangle time, Madame was unquestionably an ugly, vain, volatile, old woman. She rarely went to Mass, but was a regular attendant at auctions, plays, and bands. She lived on coffee, sausages, and snuff, subscribed to all the gayest French literature, and to a Parisian daily journal, but as far as any one

could tell, had never received aletter, or a visit.

Her apartment resembled a lumber-room ; nay, it *was* a lumber-room ! Even the top of the four-post bed, was choked with rubbish ; books were stacked high upon the floor, and she appeared to have an irresistible passion for old clocks, stuffed birds, invalid lamps, and illuminated card-board boxes. She confessed that she rather liked dust. " I am getting used to it," she calmly announced. " We shall all come to dust ourselves ere long, and what harm is the poor dust doing ?—we may be dispersing our ancestors ! " And when Mrs. Cooney (who was not too particular herself) insisted on a half-yearly turning out and sweeping, which nearly suffocated the tenants of two landings, Madame's outcries were as loud and as tragic as if she were some magpie, whose nest was in process of being robbed !

Madame had lived twenty-five years at Number Seventy-six, and the two girls her

neighbors twenty-five months, ere they spoke, though they frequently met upon the stairs; once or twice the Dorans had seen the old lady dancing and snapping her fingers on the landing, in response to the lively strains of the fiddler in the attic, and had not unnaturally concluded, that he was intoxicated, and that Madame was mad!

.

It was a kettle of hot water that first introduced them! One night the old lady had an alarming attack of bronchitis, and peremptorily knocked up her neighbors. Oh, what a spectacle she presented, as she sat erect in the frowsy four-poster, wearing a ragged camisole, her poor old face all contorted in her struggles for breath. Mabel lit the kitchen fire, boiled water, improvised a steam respirator, and other remedies, and remained till day-break with the sufferer. The sufferer, when convalescent, was gracious and grateful to her kind nurse, and pressed

her hand, with her hard skeleton fingers, as she said—

"Mabel, they call you, I know; but I call you Marie, *ma chérie*, after a grande dame and angel, I once knew; you have her eyes—her proud gray eyes—and her kind heart."

Madame went further than mere words. With husky whispers and much secrecy, she administered to Mabel occasional cups of most excellent coffee, and endowed her with such little gifts as a box of matches, a reel of cotton, and once, with a broken china dog and a string of blue beads—but then, it happened to be Mabel's birthday!

It was autumn now, and Dolly had a bad cold—the effects of thin old shoes, and wet feet—and was confined entirely to the house. She looked extremely frail and languid, and her loud harsh cough resounded sadly up and down the great, bare, stone staircase. Madame frequently brought in her *chaufferette* and sat with

her during her sister's absence. She was ailing, too, and inclined to be irritable. Her visits to Dolly were not absolutely unselfish : she was weary of her own society, weary of her novels, of her thoughts, and even of sitting over her fire, humming ancient songs, and admiring her still pretty feet ; the back room was dull, whilst Dolly's apartment was comparatively gay—sometimes two cars and a cab would pass within an hour ! And there were milk carts, and postmen, as well as police and beggars.

The old lady was visibly failing, and poor Mabel had now two invalids on her hands instead of one. She herself had lost her bright smile, her light step ; if Dolly's cough kept her awake hour after hour, Mabel's anxieties performed the same grim office for her. Both pretended, nevertheless, that they slept soundly, and rested well.

At last Madame succumbed, and took to her bed, and Mrs. Cooney thought it

only right and proper, to call in a doctor —a busy, clever young man, who paid his visits afoot, and had many cases among the poor.

"You can't do much for *me*," was Madame's abrupt accost, as he entered her room; "the machine is old, the works are worn out—*n'est-ce pas, mon ami?*"

He felt her feeble pulse, and made no reply, save silence. How wise is silence!

"But next door there is a girl of twenty-two—*pauvre enfant.* She has a cough—*c'est affreux;* but I think perhaps she may be saved. Knock, and say I've sent you;" and she pressed a sovereign into his unaccustomed palm.

The doctor found the sisters sitting in shawls—they had no fire—the room was damp and cold, but neat, and even in a way, elegant. There were armchairs, genteelly covered, but very infirm, cushions made out of odds and ends, a scrap screen, a few pictures and miniatures, all

remnants of another home. He talked warily to Dolly—asked some casual questions, sounded her lungs and with one long look in her face withdrew, followed by her trembling—yes, trembling sister. What was to be his verdict: Life or death?

"Well?" she said at last. "Tell me the truth, please."

"She is delicate. One lung is undoubtedly touched. She is greatly run down—that cold, raw room is fatal, and she requires nourishing food—chicken, fish, eggs, milk, port wine and oysters, if possible." He hesitated, and looked interrogatively at Mabel, and then continued: "Take her away," with a gesture of his hand, "take her out of this damp place to a warm climate. It's her only chance. If you can get her over the winter, you may save her. Take her to the Canaries, to Algiers, or to the south of France."

"Why not tell me to take her to Heaven at once?" cried his listener, passionately,

as she steadied her clammy hands on the balustrade.

"Have you no friends?" he inquired.

"No, none that would give us more than a long letter of advice, and a post-office order for ten shillings," was the bitter reply.

"Then God help you; I am afraid it's a bad business," he responded with a sigh. Alas, alas, how many of the same sad cases, came into his daily round; where money can give warm soft air, luxury, sunshine, life; haggard poverty on a hard kitchen chair, in a damp back room, must die. Yet people assure us that it will be all the same a hundred years hence!

"You mean, then, that my sister is doomed?" said Mabel Doran, speaking slowly and with great effort; "that I must part with her, gradually take leave of her day by day, and see her die by inches, before my eyes?"

"Whilst there is life there is hope," re-

joined the doctor, with ill-assumed cheeriness. "I'll look in again and bring her a cough mixture; the old Frenchwoman," pointing to Madame's room, "had better settle her affairs at once; send for her friends." And he ran quickly downstairs, for his time was valuable,—though not in the way of fees.

Poor Mabel stood listening to his rapid steps; she felt choking, her heart was breaking, she dared not face Dolly, or even Madame, she must cry,—and cry alone.

The two attics were empty; she stole up to the landing, and sat down on the top step, with her head in her lap, and there, in the words of Scripture, "she lifted up her voice, and wept sore."

That same night, Mabel Doran wrote, and figuratively laid herself at the feet of her relatives; anything, anything, to save Dolly!—sixty pounds was the price of her life, if husbanded with care—and she would work all her days to gain that sum; it was a most frantic, and piteous appeal.

Then she went out, and posted it with her own hands, and returned to "settle" Madame for the night, and to tell her her plans, if her letter proved to be successful.

How the room reeked of coffee, kerosene oil, and onions! Madame was sitting up in bed reading; she put down her *feuilleton*, and listened with grave attention.

She herself, had not visited Paris for thirty-four years—"*C'est changé sans doute*," she averred—but proffered the name of a small and respectable hotel, which she believed was still in existence. She talked of the sunny South, its blue, blue sea, the flowers, and the orange groves; but when she came to speak of Arles,—her native place, the great tears coursed down her aged face.

"Handsome as an Arlesienne! Yes, and I had my day. I was a beauty once—I enjoyed my little hour. *Helas! la jeunesse n'a qu'un temps! Le bonheur n'aime pas ceux qui vieillissement. La fin de la*

vie, ne vaut jamais grandchose! Enfin! I made the most of my time. I was admired, celebrated, feted, feared—*oui, ma parole d'honneur—moi—qui vous parle —la miserable Vouvray*—I was powerful, and I did some mischief, and some good" —she paused and smiled as if recalling to herself, former happy and triumphant moments. This smile was familiar to Mabel; she had often seen it flickering round the old lady's thin lips, as she cowered over the fire, whether humming an air, indulging in dreams and memories of long ago, or caressing and admiring, her pretty arched instep.

Certainly Madame was a lady—however eccentric—her hands and feet testified to her good birth, of the latter she was extravagantly vain, even to the present moment, —and she was well educated, spoke and read English, played the guitar with her stiff old fingers, wrote a beautiful hand, and read many books (not novels), but heavy morocco-bound volumes, the works

of Racine, Corneille, Voltaire and Fénèlon. These were once bound in scarlet morocco and stamped with a splendid gilt (but somewhat tarnished) crest ; but now, alas ! these poor foreign books were stark naked ! Before taking to her bed Madame, one night, had stripped the gorgeous gold and morocco covers from their stately backs, and burnt them. Fie ! what a smell of roasting leather ! The Dorans anxiously asked one another, "*what* had the old lady been cooking ?"

Day after day passed, during which Madame built magnificent castles in the air for her young friends, but these edifices came to nothing, whilst Dolly's cough increased so much as to disturb even the fiddler, and ticket collector.

Madame, too, was growing visibly feebler, and actually suffered Mabel to see her, minus her wig or rouge ; and without these, she looked fully eighty years of age. She had a good deal of money—hoarded in the sleeve of an ancient brocade dress—

tied up like like a roly-poly, and thrust under her pillow; from this, she reluctantly doled out small sums to Mabel, for her own scanty expenses.

"I've ample for my funeral," she declared, "and it will take place soon: a plain deal coffin, no monument, no headstone. Vouvray is not my name; Vouvray is a wine!" and she cackled, "and not a bad wine either."

Madame stubbornly refused to see a doctor, but eventually she consented to receive a priest, who paid her several visits, and one evening, Mabel found him rapping at their door. At first, when she opened it, she stared, for she thought by the dim winter light, that he was carrying a sick child, but soon she distinguished that he had the Sleeve in his arms! It was of very frail old brocade, tightly stuffed with notes and gold,—and appeared much too delicate to travel.

"Can you kindly oblige me with a bag or basket?" he asked. "I'm afraid all

the money will be rolling about the road, and we'll be having Domnick Street paved with gold."

"So she has given it to you, then?" exclaimed Mabel, as she endeavored to squeeze the bundle into a basket.

"Yes; there's three hundred pounds at least in it, she says; part for the Little Sisters of the Poor—part for masses for the repose of the soul of a dead man. You are to get the bulk of her fortune."

"I don't think she has any more than what she hoarded in that sleeve," said Mabel, gravely.

"Well, anyhow, I hope she has, for your sake. I'll return the basket to-morrow, with many thanks to you for the kind loan." And he bade the sisters "good evening."

Madame grew daily weaker—she was dying quietly of mere old age.

"It was that article in the *Figaro* that finished me," she declared. "I laughed so much and so long, I exhausted all my

poor little stock of life. The joke killed me! Any news from *ces barbares?*"

Mabel shook her head in melancholy negation.

"Never mind, Marie, *a cœur vaillant rien d'impossible.* You shall go south, all the same."

"But I've no money. I've even sold my mother's watch, to keep out of debt."

"Well, I'm going to give you something that you shall sell, and that will bring in more than a watch—but not until I am dead, *chérie.* Pray, that I may pass quickly and soon. I wish I may go *vite —vite*—that Dolly may live! I have here two letters in this book—stamped and directed this ten years. When I am gone, post them yourself—at once—and promise me, on your honor, not to read the address."

"Certainly, I will not."

"Now open the bureau. Take care of that big glass chandelier on the ground—it was a marvelous bargain—and put your

hand in the far top drawer, and grope, till you find a box. Have you got it? Then bring it here. I've got no relations —that is all I possess, and it cost me dear, but it is my gift, my legacy, to you and your sister Dolly."

And as Madame spoke, she sat up with a supreme effort, and struggled to untie the piece of old window cord, which held together a dilapidated cardboard box. At last she succeeded, and dragged out a lumpish parcel, wrapped in newspaper, and black wadding. From this, she eventually extricated a great green necklace, also bracelets, tiara, and stomacher, with brooches and ear-rings to correspond. The stones were apparently dark green glass; they were unusually large, (vulgarly so), and were set in most dainty gilt filigree.

"Here, Marie, is your fortune! This you will sell, when I am 'gone, and when I'm lying in the corner of a horrible damp cemetery over here in your country, you and Dolly will, please God, be in an

earthly Paradise—basking in my native sun. You must go and see Arles, some day, *chérie;* sweet Arles—*mon pays*—kiss one of its stones for my sake."

Mabel accepted the *parure* with due gratitude—of course it was green glass, and absolutely useless—but the giver's intention was kind. Poor old lady—she had no doubt picked it up at some auction—like the chandelier—and believed that she had got another "marvelous bargain."

"Ha, ha! *méchante,*" she cried excitedly. "I see that you imagine that they are false!—but the stones are emeralds, and form a superb *parure.*—Once, I desired them madly, and they were given to me in exchange for something valuable—a—a—secret"—she sat more erect, her old eyes blazed, as she repeated—"a—state—secret—a——" Suddenly she gave two or three little choking gasps, and sank gradually back on the pillow, whilst the heavy necklace slipped slowly from her powerless hands. Yes—

it was all over. In a moment Madame had passed away "*vite*"—"*vite*"—"*vite*" —as was her wish, and had gone to a land, where all secrets are known.

.

As the old Frenchwoman had no connections, or kin, her effects were accordingly dispersed at one of her favorite auction marts, and the venerable and eccentric lady was speedily and completely forgotten; and even six weeks after her death, all that most people could remember about her, was her big blue umbrella! Her umbrella was her monument!

Meanwhile Mabel worked hard to supply her invalid with light, and food, and fuel. More than once, the sisters had turned over Madame's legacy, examined it anxiously, and put it away with a duet of sighs.—The great big green stones had not even one blemish, and every one knew, they assured one another, that emeralds "were invariably full of flaws," however valuable.

One day, Dolly for lack of occupation took out the tiara and rubbed up the filigree and the stones. The setting was certainly most delicate and exquisitely fine, and the jewels flashed back bright dazzling glances from their melancholy dark green depths. Could they be real after all? Why not make inquiries?

Between two music lessons, urged by her eager sister, Mabel had screwed up her courage, and taken the necklace to a jeweler's. One of the assistants came forward, listened to her timid explanation, opened the parcel carelessly, and turned over the ornaments with a faint smile.

"Might I ask what you think these stones are, miss?" he inquired with a look of amusement.

"I was told that they were emeralds," she answered with a vivid blush.

"Emeralds!" in a shocked voice. "Oh, no; they appear to be French—probably French paste. They might suit a fancy dress or a stage costume;" here

he rolled up the necklace and, as he handed it back to her with a negligent bow, he added, "They are not bad imitations."

After this sore rebuff, the despised green ornaments were put away. But in about a fortnight the spur of want, and of a naturally persistent nature, carried Mabel and the green paste necklace to a small second-hand shop, not very far from the Liffey. It was here, she had disposed of her mother's watch.—If it had not been dark, she would have recognized it hanging in the window, and ticketed at a price that would have surprised her.

The young man to whom she had sold it, received her present parcel with a grin.

"It's a clock this time!" he exclaimed, facetiously, "I can tell by the weight." And then he proceeded to unfold the wrappings, and beheld—no, not a clock, but a necklace. He was a stolid person, with Flemish blood in his veins, and well accustomed to being offered all manner of

queer articles, from a Spode soap-dish to a diamond tiara.

"Hullo, hullo, I can at last believe I'm in the Emerald Isle, when I see this, eh?" and he sniggered, as he held up the necklace. But when he had carefully screwed a microscope into his eye, his grin faded, his face grew serious, not to say solemn. He inspected the ornament narrowly, and at his leisure, then he deliberately pronounced his opinion of the gaud. "Glass! and good glass at that; but the setting is the real ticket—old French pattern, old and remarkable—but gilt of course. As a curio, Mr. Dock might be inclined to trade, I'll just ask him," and he called his master to the far end of the shop, where they mumbled together in consultation and argument, for what seemed to Mabel an hour, but which was really not more than ten minutes. It happened to be a dark, wet night, and she began to feel nervous. It was long after seven. Why not return in the morning?

It was a slummy, horrid sort of part of the city. At last the proprietor came forward, and said as he rubbed a pair of exceedingly dirty fat hands—

"Come! I don't mind giving you five pounds for it, miss."

Five pounds for gilt and glass! And she wanted the money so badly. Mabel hesitated for a second, the word of assent was almost uttered, when in a mirror, she intercepted a quick delighted wink, which the shopman was bestowing upon his patron, who was already in the act of unlocking his cash box.

Instantly her "Yes" was changed into "No, thank you."

"No! not five pounds!" cried the old man, turning over the ornament with a contemptuous finger.

She edged nearer to the counter—an unexpected proceeding.

"Come now, my dear, I like to do a little deal with a pretty young lady, and I take fancies to customers as well as

articles sometime—articles which are of no intrinsic value, as I'm a collector of curios, you see, as well as watchmaker, and jeweler. Now, look here, I'm robbing my family, but I'll give ten pounds for that necklace—ten gold sovereigns." His eyes were greedily fixed on the ornament ; it was very evident that the more he looked at it, the better he liked it.

"No, thank you," she answered steadily.

"*What* does the lady want?" he demanded querulously of his assistant, raising his voice as he spoke.

"Surely she does not suppose that they are *real!* Ha! ha!"

If the setting was gold, why should the stones not be real? Why were the men so anxious, so full of smoldering excitement?" asked Mabel of herself.

"Twenty pounds!" with a violent thump of his fist. "You'll never get such an offer again. Gott in Himmel! Never!"

It seemed to the girl, who was now

trembling from head to foot, that the shopman was quietly working round between her and the door; the master looked red, nay purple; his great under lip slobbered and quivered, and beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, as he thundered out—

"Fifty pounds! Seventy pounds!"

"No!" she almost screamed, suddenly snatching up the necklace off the counter; in a second she was out in the dark wet street, and running. Once, impelled against her will, she looked back, and saw against the bright light, two eager figures in the doorway, one was preparing to follow her! She darted round the corner at full speed, fled up a narrow back lane, where she ran against a drunken virago, who used awful language, then she turned at last into a well-lit street, and oh joy! joy! she heard the familiar tram bells, and climbed into the car. It mattered not a jot what tram it was,—she was safe. People stared a good deal at a pale,

wet, breathless girl, who sat gasping among them, with a large green necklace (or rosary) dangling loosely in her trembling hand.

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That night, the sisters held a long and solemn consultation, and agreed to seek the aid and advice of the rector of the parish, the Reverend Patrick Capel. He and his wife, had always shown a kindly interest in the two orphan girls, but the pride of these young ladies, even exceeded their poverty, and though always courteous and agreeable, they seemed to shrink from any civilities—they apparently turned them over in their own minds dubiously, and suspected the kernel, "Charity." No, they never once took tea at the Rectory, though they gladly helped at working parties, actually subscribed to the Parish Magazine, and rarely passed the plate on Sundays. Mrs. Capel, who had manifold parish duties, called on several occasions, but never once found

the Miss Dorans at home, and she set them down in her own mind, as a pair of "pretty, poor, but totally inaccessible girls." Little did she ever suspect their poverty, or how long a loaf, and candle, were coaxed to hold out, or that they purchased coal by the stone!

Mr. Capel was, under these circumstances, exceedingly surprised to learn one day, that the elder Miss Doran was awaiting him in the drawing-room, that she had been there for more than an hour, and wished to see him on particular business. He entered at once, turned up the gas, poked the fire, and after they had exchanged greetings he noticed how very ill Mabel Doran looked—or was it the light? Then, in a short time, he was listening to her tale with the deepest interest, and surveying the *parure* with ignorance to correspond.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said briskly. "Leave the ornaments with me. I'll lock them up in my desk. One of my

parishioners is a jeweler and lapidary—a really first-rate man—you may rely upon his opinion and his honesty. I'll show him the stones, and let you know the result at once ; and if he gives us reasonable encouragement, why then, we will send them over to London, and see what can be done. I'll show them to Mrs. Capel when she comes in. I'm sure she will admire them, for even if they are not very valuable, at any rate they are most beautiful. They are my favorite of all jewels, and you will remember that the fourth stone in the foundation of the Holy City is an emerald—surely not clearer, or more flawless, than what we see before us !"

And certainly these had never looked so rich, so real, or so dignified, as just now when the entire suite was spread out under the gas, on the Rector's crimson tablecloth.

The next afternoon there was a sharp rap at the Miss Dorans' door and Mrs. Capel and the Rector walked in, to the

genuine dismay of the two girls. The visitors had not gone through the usual formality of knocking at the chief entrance, and accepting the slavey's standing lie. No, they came up direct ; and Dolly's hacking cough, informed them that she, at least, was within.

Oh, what a poor, cold room it was ! but neat, refined, and self-respecting,—just like its tenants. Mrs. Capel's quick eye took in many clever little shifts, that made it both tasteful and homelike; she also noticed, that there was no fire.

"I come to bring you good news," said the Rector, as he shook hands. "Those lovely stones were shown to my friend the lapidary this morning, and he pronounces them real—real emeralds, of enormous value."

"But the jeweler——" began Dolly.

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Capel, "it was their size, and perfect condition that misled people—similar stones are extremely rare, even in London or Amsterdam, much

less over here; and a jeweler who was offered such wonderful emeralds across the counter in a cardboard box, and wrapped in newspaper, would not dream of looking at them seriously."

"That is true," admitted the Rector, "but the old dealer had his suspicions—very faint ones, no doubt, and you had a most happy escape out of his hands. Only suppose for a moment that you had sold the set for five pounds—I declare Harris Foley, the lapidary, turned quite pale, when I told him of your adventure."

"We have a capital plan," said Mrs. Capel. "It is, that you both come to the Rectory on a visit." When seeing a refusal on Mabel's lips, "Now now, pray hear me out! You, Miss Mabel, shall go over to London at once. We know of some nice quiet lodgings, and a friend of ours, will undertake to transact your business and dispose of the emeralds to the very best advantage. It may take a little time of course——"

"But," broke in Mabel, hastily, "I may as well tell you candidly, Mrs. Capel, that we have no money beyond my weekly earnings, and if I give up my pupils, even if I had the means to go to London, what should we do?"

"Ah! I see you have no faith in your good fortune," said the Rector. "Now I have; and I am going to advance you a certain sum, whether you will or not—you shall repay me, of course, some day—and meanwhile I am your pastor, and you will have to obey me," and he nodded. He was a handsome man of sixty, tall and erect, with a kindly face, and a remarkably infectious smile.

"We will send a cab for you both in an hour's time," added his practical wife, "unless you would like me to remain, and help you to pack? Very well then, if you are not at the Rectory at four o'clock, I shall return and fetch you." And forthwith she and her husband took their departure.

Mrs. Capel, however, could not separate the sisters, though they obediently remained at the Rectory in a condition of intense anxiety, and bewilderment whilst Madame's legacy was despatched to London to seek its fortune. After considerable delay, the amazing intelligence arrived, not merely that the *parure* was composed of matchless emeralds, but that it had been recognized, and sworn to, as a set of long-missed and celebrated jewels, the property of the Crown of France ! moreover, that the French Government were prepared to repurchase them, for the sum of £10,000 sterling.

When Dolly and Mabel heard these most wonderful tidings, they could hardly believe that they were not dreaming. However, they soon realized that the news was a splendid fact. Everything was speedily arranged for them by their good friends, and the jewels exchanged for a large cheque, and a short time afterwards, the sisters followed the emeralds over to

Paris. They went south, as their benefactress had predicted, where among the soft and languorous airs and orange groves, Dolly received not merely a reprieve,—but a new lease of life. The happy pair made a dutiful pilgrimage to Arles, and there conscientiously carried out Madame's bequest. As to who she was, or the manner in which the Crown jewels came into her possession, is a mystery (perhaps a State mystery) which is the subject of vain speculation, idle conjecture, and foolish guesses, even to the present hour. But the hand which held the key of the enigma is in dust, and the secret died with Madame Vouvray.

SULLIVAN'S BARGAIN.

PART II.

"So I hear as yer father's afther selling the ould ass," said Mrs. Flynn to Judy Sullivan, as they toiled uphill together, from their mutual well.

"I'm not sure about selling him, Mrs. Flynn dear," rejoined Judy with a grin of deprecation; "'twas more like swopping, *I* take it."

"An' how was that, acushla?"

"Ye see, me father has had it on his mind to get shut of Jerry this good while back; he was gettin' a bit stiff, and he thought av he waited too long, he'd be getting too ould entirely."

"Oh, faix, he was ould enough to be valuable," rejoined Mrs. Flynn, with a derisive laugh. "Isn't he the wan age, as

yer brother Matt—as is in Ameriky—and that will bring him in for five-and-twenty year, though he is not on the parish register. Well I mind the two ! a gray foal, and a fat lump av a baby, when I come to Thady's Corner, a young slip av a girl meself."

Mrs. Flynn was now a stout, elderly woman, with a pair of somewhat rollicking brown eyes, and a brimming tin can in either hand, whilst her companion was "a slip of a girl," dressed in a washed-out lilac cotton, with curly red hair and a freckled face, who carried with anxious care a brown teapot, and a black kettle.

The pair were celebrities in their humble way—the matron for her long tongue, and the maiden for her light foot. They lived almost next door to one another, in a cluster of cabins, too insignificant to claim the title of village, and known by the name of "Thady's Corner," although there was no corner to be seen ; on the contrary, the little gathering was boldly

perched on the side of a bare hill, about five miles from Killarney.

"And what sort of a dale did yer father make out over the baste?" resumed Mrs. Flynn.

"Oh, dale, indeed! 'Twas a traveling tinker as came round one day last week when the old Jerry was bet up with turf drawing, and had scarcely a leg under him, and the thief had such a slutherin way wid him, he persuaded me father that the ass was just dying on his feet, and he offered to take him away to bury him, so that he mightn't have the annoyance of seeing him in the death-grip! However, me father was not so soft as all *that*, and after the divil's own haranguing and bargaining, the tinker giv' two shillings in money, a toasting fork, and a terrible big skillet—the biggest pot I ever laid eyes on."

"Well, to be sure, 'twas no great price, and yer at the loss of the ass."

"Faix, we are so, an' miss him at every

hand's turn. Me father spent the money on porther, and me mother is raging mad to find her elegant big pot was just an ould wan patched up, and has a hole in it the size of a caubeen. Sure 'tis no manner av use at all, at all. We have just stuck it in the gap in the garden to keep the pig out, and it does that, as well as anything else, an' the villain of a tinker went and tuk a couple of the best hins away wid him, by way av keeping the ass company."

"The blaggard!" ejaculated Mrs. Flynn, now setting down her two cans, and placing her hands on her capacious hips. "Them tinkers is shocking thieves, they would stale the cross off an ass's back, and whatsome ever they mend, just melts in yer hand! I'm terrible sorry for ye. Would ye know the chap again?"

"Me father says he'd swear to him in Jerusalem. He had a patch over wan eye, and a black and white waistcoat."

"Well, I'd a wish fer ould Jerry—there

is not a funeral or a wedding, nor a wake, in these parts, he hasn't had a hand in. Manny and manny a lift he giv' me ; be-dad, he was as souple as the best in it, and when he had a mind, he would rattle a car as well as any ass going the road."

" Maybe the next wan will do as well, Mrs. Flynn dear," rejoined Judy, with smiling complacency.

" The next wan, do yer say ! Begorra ! the price of a cracked skillet won't go far in buying a good baste."

" Sure, didn't me father have an order from Matt, ere yesterday, fer four pounds ! I expect Matt would be vexed if he heard tell about old Jerry, seeing they was reared together, and wor companions as I may say. We wor laying out to buy a sow, but, afther all, ye see we *have* the cart and tackling, and so me father is going to buy a fine young donkey or maybe a jennett, at the fair at Kilorglen."

" Is that so ?" returned Mrs. Flynn, drawing in her double chin and eyeing the

girl gravely. "Still, I'm thinking, ye will be lost widout old Jerry; he was a grand wan to draw turf or hay, or go to chapel, and market. He knew every turn in the road, and who will bring yer dada safe back on fair days avick? Sure, they had only to stretch him on the car, and Jerry just tuk him home same as a Christian, and maybe betther, for he was a wather drinker. Where's the young wan will do that? He was terribly exparianced, ye see," warming with her theme, "and no expense whativer, but kep' himself. It isn't every ass would ate turf, and whins, and sticks, aye, and I've seen him breaking his fast on a newspaper before now! I'm thinking a young wan will be twice as impident! Howsomever, I can't be wasting me whole day discoursin' of an ass, though he *was* the only one in Thady's Corner."

And taking up her shimmering cans, Mrs. Flynn pursued her way with an air of dogged resolutions, until she happened to encounter another matron *en route* to

the well, and again felt called upon to halt, —though Judy, with the fear of her mother before her eyes, hurried on, with a civil good-evening.

"Did ye hear of Sullivan swopping away old Jerry for a cracked skillet?" inquired Mrs. Flynn of her acquaintance.

"Troth, an' I did so," replied Mrs. Macan, with a superior smile.

"And as Matt has sent four pounds from Ameriky in a letter?"

"I did; I saw the money-order with me own two eyes."

"They are talking of buying a jennett, no less, at Kilorglen fair," continued Mrs. Flynn, with a touch of contempt.

"How grand we are! There'll be no holding Judy, nor the mother."

"Augh! Sure, don't ye know very well as Micky will drink half the jennett long afore *that*."

"That's true, an' so he will," agreed the other solemnly.

And the prospect of this amazing feat,

had the immediate effect of raising their spirits, dispersing a great cloud of envy and malice, and throwing the two fat gossips into a simultaneous roar of laughter.

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Nevertheless, Mrs. Flynn was wrong for once. Mrs. Sullivan had kept the money in a place of safety—in fact, an old teacup in the thatch; and the four one-pound notes were intact when the morning of the fair day dawned. Dawn found Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan already *en route* to the "Puck" fair. They set off at two o'clock in the highest spirits, Mrs. Sullivan wearing an ancestral blue cape cloak, a good green stuff gown, and a yellow handkerchief tied over her head; Micky important in his Sunday suit. They had borrowed a neighbor's pony, and yoked him to their own cart. The pony was for sale, and their prospective purchase was to bring them home.

The way was long, the pony was old, and the fair was already in full swing

when the eager couple arrived. Micky immediately treated himself to a glass of whisky and porter ; and, uplifted by the beverage, and the delightful sensation of having unspent money in his pocket, he drifted off into the horse park as happy as a king.

There, he encountered various acquaintances, and rambled about, passing his opinion on animals with immense gravity ; sharply criticising shapes and breeding, leaping and action, precisely as if he were a wealthy Dublin dealer, come to collect hunters for "the show," instead of a poor laboring man, with the price of an ass in his pocket.

He talked big, he swaggered here, and he swaggered there, with his hands clasped under his coat-tails, and a straw in his mouth.

He priced a broken-down thoroughbred in an off-hand lordly manner, wrenched open the jaws of an indignant polo pony, and glared into her mouth.

He surveyed an upstanding young hunter with a severely suspicious eye, and passed disparaging remarks upon his ribs, and his ancestors.

"Begorra, 'tis you as knows a good horse when ye see him," exclaimed one of Micky's companions.

"Faix, I'd rather take Micky Sullivan's opinion of a colt, than Tim Maher's any day," announced another.

"Augh, Tim Maher!" protested a third with lofty scorn. "What does *he* know of the grass of a goose?"

"Anyhow, he's a terrible stern hand at a bargain. I've known him drive a colt home fourteen mile, all on account av half a crown as was between him and a Tralee dealer."

Meanwhile Micky and his satellites strolled through the fair, and still no animal found favor in his eyes.

The day was sultry, and when the party drew near "The Three Shamrocks," Micky cordially exhorted his acquaint-

ances to "come in, and let him see if any of them had a mouth on him." Which invitation was, needless to say, accepted with effusion.

Meanwhile Mrs. Sullivan was also enjoying herself prodigiously among the matrons of her acquaintance. It was the essence of a whole London season compressed into a few hours. She talked over "matches," the shocking price of butter, and the terrible fall in pigs; she accepted a cup of tea from one friend, and a glass of sherry wine from another (leaving, according to polite custom, a certain portion in the glass), she made several cautious purchases, and at five o'clock, set out in search of Micky.

She soon discovered him in his glory, the center of a smiling crowd; he was bargaining with a bearded stranger for a somewhat dilapidated animal, cast from the Kenmare hearse.

"Is it a *harse* as yer losin' your time over, Micky?" she expostulated in her

shrillest key. "An' what would we do with a great black baste like that, as would neither fit in the car, nor the byre, and would just ate us out av house and home?"

"Oh, he's a fine baste, and barrin' a couple av splints and a back sinew, has a power av work in him yet," rejoined Micky. "Sure, won't I hire him out for plowing, and in the saison, he can carry the ladies through the 'Gap,' an' always great show for the money."

"Ah, show yourself! don't be going on wid yer blathering and nonsense; it's an ass we came to buy, and not a big elephant like that. The fair is thinnin', old Tim has got shut av his pony, so ye best to buy something to take us home; I'll be no party to harse-dealing, and hiring out, and when ye have the right *size* of baste, ye will find me and the cart at Mrs. Flood's," and with an angry toss of her yellow head, and a whisk of her blue cloak, Mrs. Sullivan fell back into the crowd, leaving

a very favorable impression upon the women folk, although one bold bachelor called out, "What do ye want with the ould hearse horse at all, Micky, or any horse whatever, when ye have such an elegant gray mare av yer own ?"

An hour later Micky arrived at Flood's jubilant and talkative, followed by two men leading a smart-looking, brown ass.

"Here ye are, Bridget," he screeched. "I've waited to a good purpose ye see ; I've been and bought, the gayest little donkey in Munster."

"An' time for ye," rejoined his better half. "Sure, every wan is going. How much ?"

"Three pounds five shillings. I bet them down from five pounds, and they were axing five pounds ten."

"Oh, axin' is one thing, and *gettin'* another. How old is he ?"

"He's four off, marm," replied his former owner, a decent-looking man in frieze, "and he is well used to a family, and I

know he will giv' ye every satisfaction; ye have only to spake to him, and, whoop! away he goes. Faix, I'll go bail, that within the week, ye will be looking on him as an ould friend."

In ten minutes' time, Neddy was in the shafts, and Micky Sullivan having taken a potent stirrup-cup, relinquished the rope reins to his consort, who was a donkey driver of no mean skill—there was no stronger wrist to chuck a mouth, no keener eye for a vulnerable place in an animal's hide, than hers, in the whole barony.

However, the new purchase required neither prodding nor other modes of persuasion; but took the road in gallant style, leaving a considerable circle of admirers round the door of "The Three Shamrocks." He traveled well, and at twelve o'clock at night brought his new owners safe and sound to the door of their own crooked cabin.

Judy, hearing the wheels, ran out with a candle in her hand to welcome her par-

ents and their purchase ; and by the light of her dip recorded the warmest admiration to the latter. Finally she unyoked him and turned him loose to look for his supper—after the manner of old Jerry.

The following morning by nine o'clock the neighbors had assembled in great force to inspect the new ass—in fact the only ass, that Thady's Corner could boast. He was passed by a committee of seventeen—men, women, and children—as a "nice shapely little baste, of a fine color, and as well shod as if he wer' a racer."

"None of the crumpled claw hoofs of ould Jerry, and wid a beautiful docked forelock, and an eye of his own in his head." The new purchase was suffered to rest, and to remain on view, for the space of that day, whilst Bridget and Mick —who had scarcely recovered from the delightful excitement of the fair—regaled their hearers with items of intelligence, news of distant friends, and what "I said" and "he said" and "she said" and

" they said " ; and " how Micky was in two minds to buy a coach horse, but that Bridget had put him out of consate wid him, forby making a holy show of Micky himself before half the boys. She was bent on an ass, an' an ass she'd have, and it had ended in her having her say, and in bringing home the grandest little baste in the fair, as they could all see wid their own two eyes."

Early the next morning, Micky Sullivan yoked his new investment to the car, and set off briskly to the bog in order to cut turf. The sultry forenoon gradually developed into a thick gray mist, and finally into an angry downpour. At first Micky and Thady Flynn,—being Kerry men,—paid no attention to the elements, but at length they were both compelled to shelter at the lee side of a turf clamp, where, with a sack over his shoulders, and a dhudeen in his mouth, Micky made the best of circumstances. He and Flynn discussed the fair, the fishing, the potato

spray, the last Land Act, and the prospects of Cork Park races.

"An' talking of racing, Micky, I suppose there's no chance of your young two-year-old taking the road of his own accord?" asked Flynn rather anxiously.

"Not at all! In the first place, I have him tethered with a bit av a suggawn, besides, he has as much sense as an old man."

"Well, it would be hard to bate old Jerry for cuteness: he was a great ass in his day."

"He was so, but he was getting foundered in the feet and shabby in the coat, and an eyesore to herself, so I had to get shut av him, an' I was main sorry, for Matty and him was reared together, and I always had a wish for the baste. Well, maybe we'd better be making a push for home now. The new little chap may be getting unaisy in himself standing so long in the pouring rain." And Micky, with some difficulty got upon his legs, drew the

sack over his head, and hobbled stiffly away to where he had left his yoke.

Yes, there indeed was the cart, but where was the new chap? the gay little brown donkey?

Micky stared in appalled silence, then pinched himself vigorously, finally turned fiercely to his companion, and shouted in a hoarse, tremulous voice—

"Now what pistrogue is this? What old witch has been casting spells on me grand new ass? What do you call yon baste, Thady Flynn?"

"Faix, av I didn't know that I was sober, an' av I hadn't me sivin senses, I'd call him ould Jerry! An' may I never, if he doesn't know his name," he added in an awestruck key.

"'Tis some blaggard as has gone and robbed me," shouted Micky; "taken off the young wan, and left me with this 'old God help us.' 'Tis either that, or the fairies? I'm thinking——"

"An' I'm thinking, as it is the tinker as

has been playing his little tricks on ye agin. Sure, they are the greatest horse copers in the wide warld. See how well he has pared and shod the ould one's hoofs, and filed his teeth, and fed him up, an', an'," with a yell of laughter, "*painted* him. But the paint wouldn't wash, ye see. Look how it has all run off av him, as if he was a threepenny calico!" and he held up his hand, covered with a dark brown stain.

"Oh, mother av Moses! What sort of thievery do ye call this?" screamed Micky, now rubbing the donkey's thick wet coat with the same result.

"Begor, them tinkers is too clever to live," exclaimed Thady with another violent outburst. "They took in a power besides yerself. Sure, not one in Thady's Corner, but thought he was a new baste, and them acquainted with Jerry this twenty year! Holy smoke! but it's as elegant a joke as I've come across this many a day."

"'Tis fine to be you, roaring and bawling, and staggering there, but, sure, I'll be the laughing-stock of the barony, and what will herself say?"

"Yer wouldn't," now gasping for breath, and drying his eyes on his coat sleeves, "give him another coat av paint, I suppose?" asked Thady in a choked voice, as he hitched himself up on the car.

"Augh! paint indeed! Don't be talkin' to me av paint," rejoined the other furiously, as, with a savage bang on poor Jerry's hide, he rattled away homewards.

At first, he turned a deaf ear to all his companion's sympathy, blandishments, and affectionate efforts at consolation, the only thing that could afford him the smallest relief, was the tinker's blood!

"Now take it aisy, Micky, me darlin'," urged his counselor, as they began to breast the last hill; "ye had a good ass yesterday, ye have the same animal to-day. Sure, ye never half valued him afore; with clever shoeing, and a few odd locks of hay,

ye won't know him for ould Jerry, and when the laugh is raised against you, take my advice, and laugh too, and that will soon stop them."

Mrs. Sullivan, when her first shrieks of horror and amazement had subsided, received the news with astonishing fortitude.

"Faix, I misdoubted *something* was not right, when he turned the chapel corner so clivir," she said in a voice of tragic calm, "but, at the worst, I thought he was a fairy."

"An' I thought it mighty quare, when he made straight for the pig's tub the moment he was out of the shafts," added Judy, "but I never suspicioned it was Jerry himself. Oh! but those tinkers, would bate the divil."

Before night, the news of the manner of Jerry's return had penetrated into every cabin within a radius of two miles, and Micky Sullivan took Thady Flynn's hint, and received the grinning condo-

lences of his friends, with the aplomb of a man of the world, made quite the best of the situation, and laughed till, as he subsequently expressed it, "he hadn't an eye in his head," and dwelt persistently upon the fact that "*he* was no worse took in, than the whole 'Corner,' no,—nor half the fair!"

The Flynns and Connors, who had been secretly envious of the splendid brown trotting ass, were now both relieved, and good-humored.

"Begor, I always said as ould Jerry come of a grand stock, was a great fellow, and had a power of work in him," proclaimed Mrs. Flynn in her loudest key.

"Ye did so," acquiesced Micky, "and knows a good baste when ye see him, not like me, as couldn't keep a valuable article when I had it, till it was, so to speak, forced on me again. An' Matt will be terrible proud to know, as we have the old playfellow still."

"But what will Matt be after saying to

ye, Mick, when he hears how ye spent the good four pounds he sent home? What will he say, when he hears that ye went and laid it out in buying yer own ould ass?" demanded a malicious female voice.

But to this question, Micky Sullivan, the inventive, and ready in retort, could find no fitting reply.

THE LITTLE BLUE JUG.

PART III.

THERE were in fact a pair of them, but as one had long lost both spout and handle, it had subsided into humble retirement behind a flaring green and yellow dish,—the pride of the whole dresser —and was remembered no more.

The jugs—plate, dresser, and cottage containing them, were the property of Martin Leary—fisherman, boatman, and poacher, better known as Martin the Miser. He lived on the side of the high-road in Kerry, and from his half-door, commanded as fine a view of river, lake, and mountain, as any one need wish to see! Martin, was a hard-featured, broad-shouldered man of sixty years of age, who worked steadily, and never drank or squandered, consequently his neighbors were at a loss

to imagine what he did with his earnings? and as he was inclined to be "dark and close in himself"—they set him down as a miser,—a character that possibly enjoys less popularity in Ireland, than in any other country!

In '47, when Martin was a boy of twenty, he and his, had sore reason to remember the great famine, which almost depopulated the kingdom of Kerry—a poor enough kingdom at its best!—Whole villages were deserted owing to death and emigration; do not their roofless walls, and grass-grown roads remain unto the present day?

Martin and his mother, were among the miserable remnant of a town land, who had been shipped to America; there for ten years, he had worked as a porter in New York, supporting his parent, and there she had died. During her last illness, Mrs. Leary had never ceased to lament her own country,—though it had been a country of starvation—nor to be-

wail the fact, that her bones must lie in alien soil.

And Martin, though toiling all day long in stirring practical New York, found many an odd moment in which to allow his mind to dwell upon his native land, and his home in far-away Ireland.—His warm Celtic imagination, did not remind him of hundreds of starving wretches fed on yellow meal, and gaunt with famine, nor did it recall fields of potatoes, black with decay, and the air full of a peculiar heavy odor of the blight.—No, but Kerry, with its lakes veiled in water lilies—its rivers full of salmon—its purple mountains, its holy churches — holy islands — fuchsia hedges, and fairies—the moist wooing air, and the soft Irish tongue.

Scarcely was his mother buried, when Martin succumbed to a mad, ungovernable longing to go home. His "home" was a roofless cottage, surrounded by eight acres of barren mountain soil, but hedged with tall fuchsias, and watered by

a brawling mountain stream—whose monotonous song had lulled him to sleep for years. How he longed to possess those eight acres! This craving for land, however poor—but merely because it is their own native soil, amounts in an Irish peasant to a hunger, an animal passion, impossible for a stranger to realize. Martin Leary returned as steerage passenger on one of the great ocean liners, which touch at Queenstown, and as he approached his destination, the first sight of the Kerry coast caused his heart to beat, and his eyes to glow. He was a lover, contemplating his adored mistress, after a separation of ten long years.

Martin found his native place much changed, but was cordially recognized by several of the townsfolk, who offered him hospitality, and a hearty welcome.

The following day, he tramped off to visit the cabin where he was born—it stood roofless in a cleft between two hills, sheltered by ash trees, and close to a tiny

pond covered with water lilies—the fuchsias had grown to enormous proportions—also the nettles, but he still was able to make out the straggling branches of a few currant bushes—where once had been the garden—also the fireside, black with smoke in the wall on which he had painted M. L.—but alas there was no chance of recovering what had once belonged to his people—the price of the freehold was one hundred and ten pounds.

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Martin Leary soon obtained lodgings, good employment and a wife; he married a former playmate, a stout country girl who brought him as her portion a dresser full of china, a feather-bed, and two goats. She proved to be an excellent hard-working helpmate—but she died of a decline at the age of twenty-five, leaving Martin with two children, a son and daughter. Martin never married again, though the local match-maker who was most anxious

to "settle" him, brought him several tempting "accounts," for it was well known that Leary was a warm man, and terribly saving—saving for what?

His neighbors, would certainly have declared "that the head of him was not right" could they have seen Martin stealing away of a Sunday evening, by roundabout boreens and by-paths, in order to visit his old home. Just four roofless walls, a well, and a few choked currant bushes. Many a night in his cabin when he had mended his nets—he sat staring into his turf fire, with his head in his hands; of what was he thinking?—of the future of his boy—a smart lad, who was getting good schooling—not at all, he was meditating on the little ruined holding by the stream—and mentally reckoning up his savings. It was known that Martin never put a foot inside a bank or a public-house, so where did he keep his money at all at all? His sister-in-law had searched the premises most indefatigably,

being exceedingly anxious to inform herself of his affairs. She had tried the floor, the chimney—the thatch and the feather-bed—but she never once thought of the little blue jug, with its narrow neck, and plump figure ; it looked so simple, and so innocent !

The jug, contained fifty-two one pound notes ! Martin picked them out, with a special bit of wire, and having wetted his thumb counted them over, with deliberate enjoyment ! each time he reckoned them, he added to their number. He was a self-denying austere man—who rose early, and worked late ; all the pleasures he allowed himself, were divided between the house among the fuchsias, and the little blue jug !

His daughter Mary, once ventured to ask him, why he did not buy another cow—and cows so down ? This was one day after he had been poaching by torchlight in the river Inney, and had caught nine fine salmon.

"Some time, me girl, you will know why," he answered gravely. "I've a better use for me money than *that*"—and this was all the information he would afford.

Martin became, as years went by, nearer and nearer; what a quantity of whisky, porter and tobacco, was figuratively stored on the second shelf of the dresser!

When she was nineteen years of age his daughter married, and left home. Mary Leary was a remarkably pretty girl; only for her face, the local match-maker would have found some difficulty in finding her a suitable husband, for her fortune was but four pounds, a fishing-rod, a couple of geese, and an old looking-glass. Then Donal the son brought home a wife, a lively, black-eyed young woman, who had forty guineas for her dower—as well as an ass, and car. Her people gave a grand wedding; "lashings of drink and chickens and bacon, and a honeymoon at Killarney no less!—excursion return price six shillings and sixpence."

But although he made a bold offer—Martin was not permitted to have the handling of the bride's fortune—the young couple managed their own money affairs, and kept the forty guineas out at interest in the Munster Bank. Then grandchildren came, and Martin made them welcome—and brought them up as well as he could, for Mrs. Donal was gay, and often in the town on her ass's car, and Donal was in constant work—*he* did not put his earnings in a jug—but squandered them in a bottle.

Martin would gather the children round him of an evening, and tell them old stories and legends—Of the great sea-serpent, that was seen in the lake—with a body twice as long as the boat—and a mane as long as an oar. Of the golden eagle, that came down from the mountain and swept up a gentleman's son and carried him right over the lake, with its claws stuck in his sash—and how he dropped the boy on an island, where a man was

cutting osiers—and seeing the eagle about to tear his prey to pieces—beat it off, and saved the child's life.

Of the well on church island—which was no island at all in those days—but by the church porch was a wonderful spring, that was common to half the country; it had a lid to it, and it was said to be under a spell that could work no harm, as long as the well was covered by sundown, and this was done for many years—but one day, a girl came for water—she happened to be in love, totally forgot all about the lid, and left the well uncovered at dusk, and the spring rose, and rose, and rose—till it flooded all the fields—there was no stopping it day or night—and people had to leave their houses, and fly up the mountain, driving their cattle before them—and when at last the water ceased—there was a great lake, eighteen miles round, and this lake is called Lough Currane unto the present day. Of the little enchanted island—that on certain times of

the year was seen to move—and how on one occasion a jeering soldier who was among the crowd of spectators threw a sword at it, and how henceforth the island had seemed to move with a limp!

Twenty years of hard work had been accomplished by Martin since he had returned from America—twenty years of saving and hoarding for one object—and now the jug was nearly full. Six months more, and he could claim the land, and ruin—they would be his for ever and ever. He visited the place surreptitiously on Sundays—mended gaps, cleared the garden, cut down undergrowth—it would save time later on.

Secretly, he thatched the pig-sty with heather—no one ever came that way now—or guessed at old Martin's employment, and delights. His only spectators were hill cattle, and wandering goats.

It had been a good season—he had earned as usual his three shillings a day and dinner—as boatman on the lake, but

he was beginning to feel the effects of years of damp and exposure, and to find that although the spirit was strong, the flesh was crippled with rheumatism—but he only wanted a couple of pounds more. One day in August Martin volunteered to lend his boat, his son, and himself, to take a party of English visitors off to the Skellegs. To the Skellegs is a long, long, pull; once out of Ballin Skelleg Bay, a boat is exposed to the full swell of the Atlantic, and unless on a picked day—in summer—landing is extremely hazardous. He determined to start from Ballin Skelleg itself, this would save the pull across the bay—and would be absent two days. After that, his last severe excursion, his labors would be over. Mr. Forbes, the agent, would surely abate ten pounds on receiving one hundred one pound notes, and with the surplus of his earnings, Martin resolved that he would pay for thatching, he would purchase a closed bed, a clock, and a second-hand bicycle

for little Matt—seeing that he would be four miles from school—these were a few of Martin's thoughts, as he bent over his horny, toil-worn hands, and strove with a heavy oar and the Atlantic swell—but as he looked back on the land with its purple mountains, seamed with silver streams, the sight gave him the force, and energy, of a man of half his age.

This was his last heavy job, thank God! a couple of Kerrys, and pigs, on his own land—what with them, and poaching the Lawn, and the Inney, he could end his days in the old home—like a gentleman!

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Meanwhile as he pulled towards the little Skelleg—two American ladies who were born explorers, walked from one of the Waterville Hotels, out into what they considered the wilds—first up the smooth coach road, then unto another highway, common to turf and sea-weed carts—and occasional jaunting cars—to where the

ground rose—and they found themselves in a glen. They had come from Cahirciveen, and were going on the next day *via* Parknasilla to Glenariff—Cork, Queenstown, New York. And they were resolved to see all that was possible in the limited time. Everything struck them as delightfully fresh, and novel—the tall black-haired girls, with their shawls over their heads, the tame little cows—and the sociable white pigs, who curled their tails into tight knots, and cantered along beside them for miles.

One of these ladies wore glasses—and carried a little note-book, in which she made brief entries from time to time. The bracken—the heather—the fuchsia hedges—the noisy mountain streams, and the curly-headed children, who only understood Irish,—all claimed her attention. At the half-door of one of the road-side cottages, stood a remarkably pretty little girl, with clouds of fair hair, and a pair of shy blue eyes.

They paused and spoke to her—and asked her name, how old she was, and if she went to school?

"Won't yer ladyships give yerselves the trouble to come in and take a sate?" said Mrs. Donal—appearing suddenly behind her little daughter, and dropping hasty courtesys.

Their ladyships smiled acquiescence, glad of the opportunity of visiting the interior of an Irish cabin, in an out-of-the-way part of the kingdom.

The kitchen had an uneven earthen floor, but it was unexpectedly clean—as were the solid chairs which were placed for them. A dresser shone with variegated crockery, the rafters were laced across with fishing-rods—there was a comfortable turf fire—a settle, and a courtesying smiling hostess, whose invitation was not inspired by expectations of a gratuity—but by the noble spirit of true hospitality, and who anxiously urged upon them, buttermilk, and soda bread.

"Do you live here alone?" asked the lady in glasses,—the spokeswoman.

"No. I live with me husband, and me father-in-law—they do be all day boating in the season."

"Have you good health here?"

"'Tis the most wholesome place I ever put me foot in."

"And what do you do with yourself?"

"Faix, not much—me lady—I rear a few chickens, and sell them in the town —an' I redd up the house, and send the childer to school, and I do make the hay, and dig the praties, when Donal and himself, are too throng——"

"Your house seems real snug and comfortable," said the lady, looking about; "that's a cute little jug you have over there—I mean the one on the second shelf,—the blue one—it looks like an old thing."

"By my faith it is *so!* Donal's mother had it, and her gran' afore her; it's a quare shape. Maybe you'd like to see

it ?" And Mrs. Leary took it down, and gave it a dust with her apron.

"Yes, it's rather quaint, eh, Sarah ?" handing it on to her friend. "I should like to have it."

"I'd give it to you wid a heart and a half, my lady, and kindly welcome to it, but it belongs to the dada."

"Perhaps he might be inclined to part with it. Is he here ?"

"No, and he won't be back till to-morrow night; he is away to the Skelleg with a party."

"And we go on by coach—at nine o'clock. Do you think he would sell it ?" resumed Mrs. Blatt. "I should like to take it with me as a souvenir of these parts—and it is an unusual color."

"I cannot rightly say, whether he would sell it or not; the dada is terrible fond of the shillings, and sets no store on crockery whatever. He'd do a dale for half a crown," she admitted; "and I'd lay me life, he'd be well contented wid three shill-

ing. There was wanst a pair of them—ye see?" producing the other, "but it's bruk."

"Well, I am quite ready to give you what you ask for it," said the lady in spectacles, slowly bringing out her purse. "If you think your father will be satisfied."

"Thank you, me lady—I'm sure he will be terribly satisfied—shall I give it a wash first?"

"No, thanks, never mind"—handing out three shillings, and placing them in Mrs. Leary's palm—"and here is sixpence for the little girl. What's her name?"

"Kathleen—me lady. Arrah, Kathleen! will ye take yer finger out of yer mouth, and say thank ye to the lady—faix, she is ready enough with her gab, at other times, but she is a bit shy in herself, afore quality. Shall I paper it up, me lady?"

"Well—if you can manage it, you may as well, thank you."

So the little blue jug, which had lived on the dresser for twenty-eight years, had

not even a moment in which to take leave of its twin, or of the gorgeous green and yellow plate, but was wrapped up in a ragged bit of the *Cork Constitutional*, and handed over to the American lady, who, sped with half a dozen courtesies, and a profusion of thanks, carried it away in triumph. That evening as Mrs. Blatt and her cousin sat among other lady tourists in the drawing-room of the hotel, she produced and exhibited her treasure trove! "I found this in a Kerry cabin," she explained. "Is it not a cunning little jug? I fell in love with it, and bought it right away."

The little blue jug was handed round from one lady to another—to-night was the zenith of its career! This rich little blue jug, had never before been in such fine society, nor so much admired in the whole course of its existence; finally it was carried up-stairs, and carefully packed away pending its approaching journey.

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Late the following afternoon Martin Leary returned, weary-armed and stiff—his cup (or jug) of happiness was now full! That same night when Donal and family had flocked up the ladder to bed, he put his hand up the chimney, sought out his bit of wire, in order to add the *last* note to his familiar stock. Then he went to the dresser—but where was the blue jug? He rubbed his eyes. He searched about softly in his stockinged feet, he lifted everything separately and carefully off the shelves. At length, unable to bear the suspense any longer, he stood at the foot of the loft ladder, and 'roused the sleepers with a loud call. "Donal! Bridgie, come down!" His voice sounded strange and hoarse.

In a few moments Mrs. Donal—but half awake—in a linsey petticoat, and her hair tumbling over her face—appeared.

"What is it, dada?" she asked; "is it sick ye are? Whativer ails ye?"

Martin looked unlike himself—his eyes wore a terror-stricken, strained expression, his tanned face had taken an ashen shade, and was twitching nervously.

"It's the *jug* I'm wanting," he said, pointing a trembling finger towards a certain vacant spot; "what's gone with the little blue jug?"

"Why thim two ladies as was passing 'ere yesterday, come in, and tuk a terrible fancy to it—and as I knew *ye* wer' not set on it, and it was no manner of use at all, beside having a crack in it, I let them have it for three good shillings, which I've got for ye. I knew you'd rather have the money nor the jug anny day."

"The money!" screamed Martin, dashing the candlestick on the floor, and seizing Biddy by the arm. "Where are they —thim ladies?"

"I believe they went off on the coach yesterday morning—they were going back to America—leave go of me, dada—*will* ye leave go! Donal," she screamed,

" come down—yer da is losin' his raisin'." But Martin had lost his senses, and fainted dead away in a sort of fit in the middle of the kitchen floor.

By daylight, Martin, accompanied by Donal and Biddy, was sufficiently recovered to crawl down the three miles to Waterville, and ere the hotel was well open, he was clamoring "to see them ladies, that had bought a jug off av his daughter—for it was all in a mistake, and he'd sooner part with his two eyes, an' his right hand, than that same bit of crockery——"

The proprietor assured Martin, that the two ladies and a maid had left by the nine o'clock coach the previous morning. A talkative chambermaid declared she remembered them bringing home a jug—but as likely as not, they were on the sea now—maybe in *that*," and she pointed to one of the Atlantic liners, which at that moment was swiftly passing the mouth of the bay.

" Sure after all, Martin ma-Bouchal, it

was no great value," said a policeman who happened to be standing by.

"Value! man alive! it had every penny I own in the wide world inside of it—one hundred and eight pounds. I kep' me money there note by note—as safe as a bank—this five-and-twenty year, and now Biddy has gone and got shut av it, for three shilling! God," he screamed, "if I don't get it back, I'll *destroy* myself—or *some* wan!" and he staggered against the wall, struggling with the awful fear that had laid hold of him.

One hundred and eight pounds! No wonder Martin the miser was beside himself! So that was where he kept his money—in a jug. His hearers had increased, and thronged open-mouthed, round the entrance of the hotel. The proprietor, and a sympathetic Englishman, who pitied the stricken man, sent off a wire to Queenstown in pursuit of the two ladies—but the answer which came back in half an hour, and which Martin breathlessly awaited,

stated that the "*City of Paris* sailed at five o'clock." Another message was despatched to await the arrival at New York. It cost seven shillings and sixpence, and was paid for by the English angler, who was one of Martin's most constant patrons. It ran as follows:

"Blatt. Return contents jug, to Martin Leary—Waterville."

In eight days' time, the reply was received and instantly made known. It consisted of but two words—"Jug empty."

This proved a fatal message to Martin Leary, who had hitherto been buoyed up with delusive hopes, and now went wrong in his head—and became so violent, that Donal and a neighbor were obliged to take him away into Cahirciveen workhouse on his ass's car, Bridget,—who followed on foot,—uttering loud lamentations, and pausing to relate all her woes to every one whom she met, and accosted her. "What on the living earth will I do at all? Sure didn't I sell away wan hundred and eight

pounds, for three shilling," she wailed. "Sure an' I never suspicioned, as me dada kept a fortune standing on the dresser in the belly av an old blue jug, and I sould it to a snipe-faced Yankee. Faix, she lost nothing over *that* bargain—but Martin Leary here, has lost his mind!"

The real truth about the missing fortune was this. Mrs. Blatt when she arrived at the hotel, had handed her treasure trove over to her maid, with a request that she would wash it carefully, and the maid having examined it with ill-disguised contempt, discovered that it was stuffed with paper—this she hooked out, by means of a considerable outlay of patience,—and a bonnet pin. It proved to be a thick roll, tightly tied with a bit of fishing-gut. She was about to toss the whole packet into the grate, when something in the *feel* of the parcel arrested her attention? In a second, she had pulled off the string, and recognised bank notes! these she counted over with feverish haste—all for one pound

each—all dirty-fingered, and reeking of peat smoke. Hearing her mistress coming, she thrust the bundle into her pocket, and proceeded to wash the jug—previous to its exhibition in the drawing-room.

Early the following morning, maid and mistress departed on the coach for Cork, and here previous to embarking, the former carried the notes to a bank, explained that she was on the point of leaving for America, and changed the paper into gold.

"What a windfall!" she said to herself as she sewed the sovereigns into a little chamois leather bag, "the horde of some dirty old Irish beggar." *She* had taken notes to far more purpose than her mistress, and sailed from Queenstown with a heavy pocket, and a light heart. May Nemesis remember her!

As for Martin Leary, the blow had killed him; the spring of his existence was broken. He emerged from the lunatic ward of the workhouse, a bent, half imbecile, wreck of what he had been a few

months previously. He maundered incessantly to those who would listen to him, about his bit of land, and cows—the grand apple trees, and currant bushes in his garden—and the finest spring of water in the whole side of the country. On this topic, he would ramble on interminably, as he sat over the turf sods gazing into the flames with lack-luster eyes. Never again, did Martin Leary take down a fishing-rod, or launch a boat—and those who would rouse him, and whispered of a torch-light affair, and a " great take in the Lawn " —addressed themselves to deaf ears.

It was generally believed, that Martin's mind had given way, the result of eating too much salt fish—which is said to account for the increase of insanity in some parts—and that the story of the fortune in the blue jug, was just as much a parcel of nonsense, as all his other balderdash about the farm of eight acres—the tight little house, and the elegant Kerry cows. Or maybe, he had been giving an-

noyance to the fairies, and digging ground —or cutting trees, where he had no call to be doing either. Whatever the cause, Martin's mind was becoming dimmer every day—and his bodily health was leaving him, simultaneously with his wits. The only thing he cared for was the broken fellow of the blue jug, and this was his favorite toy in his second childhood ; the miserable old man would hold it in his languid hands, and gaze at it fondly for hours. Finally he took to his bed, and when it became evident that he was going fast, the priest was sent for, to administer the last sacraments, and the dying man's mind leapt up into a bright flash—the final gleam before life expired.

"Donal," he said in a loud strong voice, "Ye mind where yer granddada lived—the last house before the waterfall—up beyond Lough Mona, it's only four bare walls—bury me on the little hill above it, under the old thorn bush——"

But Martin's last wish was naturally

looked upon as "more of his quare mad notions"—and he was laid in consecrated ground beside his wife and kindred. The Learys could not afford a stone, so they put a black wooden cross over the old man, and Kathleen (his favorite grandchild) carried up the little blue jug full of wild flowers, and placed it at the foot of his grave. The small holding on the hill,—the subject of Martin's futile ambition, and long-agonized strivings—fell back once more into solitude and neglect. The garden is overgrown, the roof of the pig-sty has fallen in, the running stream is choked; perhaps the wandering cattle, and goats, miss the busy figure to which time had accustomed them—perhaps not! At any rate, Martin Leary of the fruitless ambition, is almost entirely forgotten, and has completely dropped out of his neighbors' memories—unless when the conversation happens to turn on madness, or misers.

The cross over his grave in the church-

yard, has long rotted down to a mere stump, but if you were to look very carefully among the long grass, and nettles, you might yet find a few fragments, of a little blue jug.

LADY MARY SLATTERY.

PART IV.

SOME years ago, when I was one of a fishing party in the south of Ireland, it was my custom each Sunday afternoon, to sally forth for a long constitutional, in order to stretch my legs,—cramped from sitting in a boat for the greater part of the week—and to explore the country. I generally explored alone !—for my brother and his wife, preferred to spend the shining hours, reading, gossiping or idling under the ash trees in the hotel grounds. During one of my solitary aimless rambles, I found myself about five miles from our quarters, turning into a shady road, the most picturesque I ever remembered to have seen.—Sheer above me, to the left, towered the dark purple " Reeks "—low on the right, glittered a silver lake,—of

which each bend in the way, or break among the trees, revealed an enchanting vista of wooded islands, bays, or promontories. But by degrees this prospect became lost to sight, a high dilapidated wall, screened it completely—a wall, bulging out dangerously here and there, but clothed with thick moss, and delicate fern—and held together with ropes of ancient ivy. A dilapidated entrance, corresponding with the wall, presently came into view, and perched on one of the tumbledown gate piers, sat an old man in his Sunday clothes, smoking a black "dhudeen." This he took out of his mouth in order to say, "A fine evening, yer honor," for the Kerry peasants are always gracious, and never pass a stranger without some civil salute.

"Can you tell me what place this is?" I inquired, halting at the gate, and pointing down a grass-grown avenue which wound away vaguely among the trees.

"An' why wouldn't I?" he replied

briskly. "'Tis called Fota. But sure 'tis in ruins—an empty house hereabouts, falls to pieces in ten years. 'Tis the soft climate as does it."

"And has this place not been occupied for ten years?" I asked.

"No, nor for thirty. Maybe ye'd like to come in, and take a look round,—for it was wance the loveliest spot in Kerry."

"That is saying a good deal," I answered. "Thank you, I should be glad to explore it," and I promptly clambered over the broken stile. Meanwhile the old man knocked the ashes out of his pipe, deliberately descended from his perch, and led the way between an overgrowth of trees and shrubs, down the back avenue into a yard, entirely surrounded by large roofless outhouses.

"Now, did ye ever see the like?" he demanded, waving one hand dramatically.

No, I certainly never had! rank grass, a foot high, covered the stones; the pump

was a wreck, the stables were mere lairs of nettles and old iron.

"An' when the ould master, General Macarthy, lived, sure there wasn't as much as a straw astray," and he nodded his head expressively. "Nor—nor—a leaf itself."

We next passed through a gap in a wall, and came on to the track of the front avenue, winding out of a forest of trees. There were trees on all sides, and on a sort of wide plateau, stood the house. I was miserably disappointed at first sight; I must frankly admit that its appearance, administered a shock! "The house" was but a cottage, and from the dimensions of the yard, the entrance, and the imposing stretch of lawns and timber, I had expected a mansion! The grounds sloped gradually down to the water's edge, which was almost entirely hidden by a dense growth of trees! Scattered over a wilderness, to the left, were wonderfully luxuriant flowering shrubs, pampas grass, arbutus, rho-

dodendron, and giant fuchsias; and, at a distance, a high and hoary garden wall; I peered into this, through its rusty gate, and beheld a mere jungle of high grass, wild flowers, and aged fruit trees, gone mad!

Then I slowly retraced my steps, and joined the old man who was sitting on a low window-sill, and from this coign of vantage, we overlooked the lake, for a considerable time in absolute silence. The situation and the view were not to be surpassed.

"And so you say this cottage has been empty for thirty years," I remarked at last.

"Yes, 'tis thirty year last June since they left it—I worked here for the General—man and boy—and the garden below was just a wonder! When he died it was let for a term; after that it went to rack and ruin."

"And does no one ever come near it?"

"Only the caretaker once a week," he replied. "It is let to grazers for dry heifers, and that's all. 'Tis a mortal pity."

I stood up as he concluded, and looked back into the empty shell of a dwelling. It was originally a glorified cottage, with four spacious rooms and a wide hall;—apparently the kitchen, and servants' premises, were at the back—the roof was still intact, the remnants of rich carving, and scraps of expensive wall paper, still streaked the walls (which also bore the signatures of half the county); in the drawing-room, was a boat, whilst the dining-room evidently served as a byre for the dry heifers!

"Of course when a house is left empty for years, 'tis a sore temptation," observed my companion in an apologetic key. "The poor people around, has made away wid the grates, and doors, and window sashes. Faix! the old General spared no money on it, and if he was to see it now, he'd haunt the place."

"It looks as if it ought to have a history," I observed, as I once more seated myself beside him.

"Faix, then, no, yer honor, I can't say as it has—but I could tell you a mighty quare tale, of a child, that was born there."

"I should like to hear it, if I may," I said, offering him my tobacco pouch.

"Well, then, hear it you shall!—here goes!" stuffing as he spoke, a generous amount of tobacco into the bowl of his pipe, and thrusting it down with a horny thumb. "'Tis more than thirty years ago, when there were no gentlemen's lodges round the lake, no, nor no coaches, or railroads, or telegraphs, but terrible long journeys, and hardships on cars—and the *best* of fishing and fowling. Now, we have a power of quality coming to and fro, and admiring all this"—waving his hand, "and bringing good money,—God be praised, for it's badly wanted.—But when I was young, a stranger hereabouts, was as much of a curiosity as an elephant; and

it made a notorious stir, when this very place was took by the Earl Mortimer and his countess."

"English people," I remarked, "I know the name." (I knew the present earl by sight, and had seen his historical abbey, his celebrated library, his priceless pictures. He was a rich, arrogant, childless, old hermit—a martyr to gout, and pride.

"Yes, Mortimer, sir. I learnt off the name, thinking of mortar," continued my companion. "They was not too long married, and come on a spree like, and without many servants——"

"What brought them here?" I asked. "How did they discover it?"

"I don't rightly know," he replied, "but they were highly delighted, I can tell ye—his lordship, wid the sport, for in those days ye couldn't put your foot on the mountain, without standing on a bird, —and as for the fish, they were waiting on ye!"

"More than they are now!" I retorted. "Many a day I've waited on them!"

"Himself liked the fishing, and her ladyship the place. It was soon after the master dying, and was just pure fairyland! The fuchsia hedges were a sight, the palms a wonder, the magnolia trees the size of a cabin--as for the passion-flowers, the house was smothered between them, and roses,—and the carnations scented half the lake!"

He paused, to draw breath after this burst of eloquence, struck a match, and then resumed.

"Ye may see this terrace here—I keep it still weeded. 'Twas here the old master took his stroll—'twas here, *she* used to walk!" He heaved a profound sigh, and then continued in a brisker key—

"Yes, his lordship and her ladyship, was well contented, though maybe it was a bit lonely for her. Many an evening I've seen her walking up and down this same terrace here, watching for the boat.

Oh, she was a picture, I declare! like an angel—on the chapel window!"

"Do you remember her?" I inquired.

"An' who wouldn't? Bedad I do—if I was to shut me eyes, I could see her standing there still, her hair, and she had crowds of it, what would stuff a pillow—was dark red, like a copper beech—a small lily face, set on a long white throat, a pair of laughing dark eyes, and wee hands just a blaze of stones. Her voice was as sweet as a song, and when she smiled, ochone! ochone! it gave yer heart a squeeze! I never saw anything like it before."

"Or since?" I suggested.

"Oh! bedad, sir, I've seen the very comrade of it, and I'll tell ye no *lie!* Well, her ladyship was mad on flowers, and she used to come and talk to me, when I was working; asking questions about the country folk, and their matches, and quare ways; and about the ould master (God rest him), and she said how sad it was to see his place let to strangers. 'It's a

paradise,' says she; 'the loveliest spot I've ever seen. You ought to be proud of your country, Mat Donovan."

"I told her I was *so*, and prouder again, that it was plasin' to *her*."

"Now that was a real bit of blarney," I remarked.

"'Twas not, sorr! 'Twas her due," he retorted with vehemence. "Well, one night there was a terrible whirra loo; her ladyship had a baby unexpected!—no doctor, nor nurse, nor clothes ready, and old 'Betty the Brag' called in, for the French maid was no good at all—but for screeching.

"The baby was a girl and a cruel disappointment, as a boy was wanted; however she had to be reared all the same, and there was no means of feeding the crature, till Betty bethought her of Katey Foley—she had a young infant. Katey was about forty, a big strong major of a woman; she'd been terribly unlucky, and lost five children—some was born dead—

some had just the breath in them. People give out, it was a fairy blast! Howsomever she had a living child at long last, three weeks old, and she took on the other poor little crawneen, and it throve elegantly. Well, when everything was going fair and aisy, bedad her ladyship all of a sudden took and died! Just went off, wid no more warning, nor a snowflake! And oh, but she made the beautiful corpse!"

"You did not see her, surely?"

"No—but I heard tell, and I tell ye, his lordship was like a mad man, and out of his mind wid grief. The windows used to be wide open—it was the summer, ye know,—and I've heard him calling on her, and crying to her to come back, to come back. I declare to ye, sir, 'twas enough to melt the Rock of Cashel; but sure, she was gone! They took her to England, along with a great train of black mourners, and left the place just as it stood, and the child wid Katey. She had a nice, decent

house of her own, and his lordship would not so much as look at the baby, and was terribly bitter against it. Bedad, there seemed a sort of a blight on the family, for in a couple of months, the child pined off and died, and was packed in an elegant little white and silver coffin, and sent away to the grand family burying ground, and laid alongside the mother.

"His lordship sent Katey Foley fifty pounds to bank for her little Mary, and there was an end of *that*. Then news came after a few years, as how his lordship was drowned off a yacht. He had never married again, and his cousin fell in for all the estates and grandeur.

"Little Mary throve well. Begorra, she was a rare beauty, and just the core of John Foley's heart, and the apple of his eye. She was that clever and quick, wid such taking ways, but awful dainty about her food, and wid a terrible high sperrit, and just bone-idle! Learning, was no trouble to *her*, if she took the notion, and she

grew up a lovely girl ; and it wasn't alone the golden sovereigns she had to her fortune, as made all the boys crazy to marry her. 'Twas her pretty face, and quare ways,—not bold at all, but imparious, and commanding. She could ha' married any one she pleased. There was a strong farmer from this side of Kenmare, crazy about her, and I knew a police sergeant, that was clean out of his mind."

"And which did she take?" I asked indifferently, for my attention was ebbing fast.

"Neither one or other," he solemnly responded. "*She* would have no match drawn down, but was for picking and choosin', the same as a lady! At the heel of the hunt, av coorse she took the worst of the pack! A good-looking boy, from near Tralee, as wild for fun, and dancing, as herself ; and sorra a penny, or a penny's worth,—but a landing-net, and a concertina! In spite of all that her

mother could say, she would have Mick Slattery, and no one else, and so they were married. She has a whole house full of childer, and no work in her at all. She's smart enough in her dress, and keeps the youngsters tidy, but no more. She'll spend half the day standing in the door, colloguing and laughing, wid the neighbors ; or running off to the town ; and she's at every dance and wake in the Barony. Mick does half the work himself, and Mary is so funny, and so enticing, he cannot say a cross word to her! Oh, she's a rare one to talk, and has always a word with the men ; and a pick, and a bit, out of them. She never leaves a feather on *me!*"

"But how do they live? if he had nothing but a concertina," I asked impatiently.

" Mick Slattery, has a piece of the line, and a good snug house at the level crossing, and he gets fifteen shillings a week. So they don't do too badly,—though she's

a terror for spending." Here he cleared his throat energetically, and then resumed.

"Ye see, old John, who was terribly proud of Mary, died; and his wife, well over seventy, was all her lone, and got raal queer in her head; they say her mother was the same,—though some made out, it was tay-drinking—sure enough she never had the taypot out of her hand!—Whatever it was, she was so mortial strange, that Mick and Mary brought her home, and let her own house; but it wasn't better, but *worse* she got!—shockingly onaisy, and restless, and worrying in herself. At long last, she bid them send for the priest, as she had something on her soul; and when he came, she up, and told him—and she told Mary, and she told *any one* that would listen to her,—and this was her story."

Here Pat took one or two loud sucks at his pipe, and again continued impressively. "What do ye think Katey giv

out ? that her child died;—it was always droopy,—and she could not bear to part wid the other. She loved it as if it was her own. Its father hated it, and would marry again, and rear a family, and never grudge *her*, the pretty little girlie at all, and so she sent off her dead baby to the grand place in England, and kept the stranger ; who grew up lovely and strong and clever, and everything that was surprising for quickness, and talk.

" Katey took great pride out of her, and soon forgot as she wasn't her own flesh, and blood. And John Foley, *he* never knew, and he just lived for his daughter. Well this lasted for years, and years, but now that Katey was growing old, her sin rose up before her, her conscience tormented her, and she said she must ease her mind, before she died, and she made out, she felt awfully bad, and that when Mary looked in her face, with her ladyship's own two eyes, and her ladyship's smile, she just stiffened in the bed !"

"And how did every one receive this amazing news,—what did they say?" I demanded.

"Faix, Mary only jeered at it, for pure balderdash. She was a Kerry woman born and bred, and Irish came easier to her than English. To be an English countess, and own castles, and coaches, and servants, and to wear a gold crown on her head, why it would kill her, if it was true—her mammy was joking, she was her own little Mary, and no one else."

"And what did the priest say?" I inquired with rekindled interest.

"His reverence gave it against Mrs. Foley too. Anyhow she was too late. Thirty years had passed, and why go to upset a grand English family, maybe for nothing. Katey had no proof, barring her bare word;—no document, no witness. Every one laughed at Mrs. Foley's queer notion, and treated the story as being a fairy tale. Mary was no Englisher, there was not a lighter foot in a jig, or a better

warrant to sing an old Irish lament, in all the country side.

"Howsomedever Katey used to whinge, and whimper, and moan; praying and begging leave to make restitution. She was altogether bedridden, and they had her within up in the room, and there she used to lie all day long, beating her two hands on the bare walls, and calling and crying by the hour. Ye see the head of her was not right, and her mother went the same way before her. She never called her daughter anything but 'Lady Mary,' that was her madness ye see—and many a time she'd screech, 'Sure, them's not my grandchilder at all, but the grandchilder, of the Earl of Mortimer. And hasn't Johnny the very moral of his fatures—oh, wasn't I the wicked woman?—I had no scruple; may the saints pity me!—but the little warm, live, child, just caught me by the heart—*how* could I send her away, and sit again by the empty cradle?'

"Well Katey carried on like this, for a

good while, no one minding the poor crazy creature—seeing as I tell ye, her own mother was took in the same way !—And in the end she died. She got the height of respect, and a funeral that cost ten pounds ; two long cars no less, and a losh of porter, and meat, and whisky. Faix, the Slatterys buried the old lady in style."

"And was that the end of it ?" I inquired.

" It was the end of Katey," he replied, " but I believe on me solemn oath, that there was something in her story all the same. It's getting a bit late," he added, rising, " me old bones is full of rheumatiz —I'm as stiff as a crutch, and I must be going before the dew falls, or me daughter will have me life."

" But surely not before you finish your story," I urged, as I also rose, and followed him towards the avenue. " What grounds have you, for thinking there was *something* in it ?"

" Faix, it's no sacret ; any one could see

it, that had eyes in their head. John and Katey, was as black as two crows—Mary has hair like a copper kettle, a white swan throat, a dancing eye, and a little weenchie hand. Oh, she's just the born image of her ladyship! Now, isn't *that* strange?" and he stopped, and looked hard at me.

"Not if she is her daughter," I answered promptly.

"Whisht!" he cried, turning about, as if he was afraid that the very trees had ears. "Never let that pass your lips! I only whisper it, in my heart, when I come here, alone,—as I do every Sunday."

"And has this strange likeness struck other people?" I asked.

"No, sir" (now drawing up his bent figure and speaking with overwhelming dignity); "you see none of the neighbors had much chance of seeing the countess. She was mostly out boating, or staying at home, and it's thirty years ago, ye know, and not wan remembers

whether her hair, was black or yellow. Now *I* saw her every mortial day—and for hours too,—and I can never forget her, for I never saw any one like her, for beauty ; no, and never will again."

" Except Mary Slattery, is she not admired, and remarked all over the county ? "

" No, I can't say she is. She's too slim, and small made, for the Kerry folk, and has no great color. They talk of her singing, and dancing, and clever smart chat, within three parishes, but no one thinks much of Mary's *looks*."

" I must say, that I should like to see her," I exclaimed impulsively.

" And why wouldn't ye see her ? That's aisy enough," he replied, " if ye will give yourself the trouble to walk up some afternoon to the level crossing, beyond the chapel. Ye will find Mary herself, standing in her doorway, wid a clean apron, and her hair as shining as new brass—ready to have a word, and a joke wid the first passer-by,—and the house

behind her just scandalous! She has no heart for work."

"Well, you have told me a most interesting story, and I shall do my best to pay a visit to Mrs. Slattery," I said, as we came at last to a halt outside the gate.

"Yes, and it's Bible truth, I'm after telling ye, and here our roads goes different ways. Augh, not at all, sir," he exclaimed. "Sure I couldn't be taking your money! Well, well, then I'll not say agin the tobacco! I'm thankful fer yer company, and fer yer kindness to a bothered old man, listening to his quare foolish talk," and with a hasty nod, he turned his back on me, and hobbled away.

In a short time, I too, was rapidly leaving the woods behind me. In spite of the tangled undergrowth and its yawning ruins—Fota was a lovely spot, and I honestly marveled that it had never found a second tenant, or that no one appreciated its beauty, no one but this ancient retainer.

"And was his all mere foolish talk?" I asked myself, as I hurried along. Truth was frequently stranger than fiction—why should not this be truth? The rugged old gardener, still haunting the spot where he had worked man and boy, and conjuring up the image of the beautiful lady, who had inspired him with such deathless admiration, presented a curious, not to say, romantic picture! I think, it occasionally happens—although telepathy is in its infancy—when one hears of an unusual circumstance, or even name, or lights upon an uncommon story, that it soon crops up a second time,—or is corroborated in some unexpected quarter.

That very same evening, Mary Slattery appeared as a topic of conversation, and it was not *I* who introduced her, but Dolly, my vivacious sister-in-law.

"So you have been for one of your dreadful Sunday tramps," she remarked to me, over the soup, "and seen a most beautiful spot. Well, I have barely

strolled a mile—and seen a most beautiful woman."

"Oh! that's a common sight in Kerry," I retorted.

"Yes, of a certain style; black hair, and gray eyes put in with a dirty finger, but my discovery is of a different type. Chestnut locks, delicate features, a graceful figure; she carries her head like royalty, and Vandyke would have been proud to have painted her hands—though they are rather red, I must confess!"

"Yes," I answered, "and I know the beauty; she lives at a railway crossing, and her name is Mary Slattery."

"Pray how did you discover her?"

"I have heard of her," I replied evasively, "but how did *you* make her acquaintance?"

"Through one of her children, who was swinging on a gate, a pretty little cherub called Johnny. I have quite a circle of new friends about here, and I know Mrs. Slattery pretty well. I've promised to go

and see her to-morrow, and to take the children a cake, and some clothes."

"Take *me* too," was my unexpected request.

"You are not in earnest! It is our last day, and you grudge every hour you have no rod in your hand."

"I'll give the fish a holiday to-morrow afternoon. I should like to see your wonderful beauty."

"And shoot her with a kodak."

"Happy thought, if she has no objection, I shall be charmed," I replied.

"She looks brimming over with good temper, and good will. I daresay she will be delighted to sit, if you will promise her a copy, but I know perfectly well, that when to-morrow comes, you will have forgotten her very existence—and by the way, you left your kodak at Killarney!"

But my lively sister-in-law was mistaken for once. Five o'clock the next afternoon, found me escorting her along

the high breezy road, which runs parallel to the railway, carrying her offerings in the shape of a paper bag (containing half a dozen rather stale sponge cakes, the best she could procure)—and a large mysterious parcel of soft goods. We soon came in sight of the white gate, and the snug house, beside it; this latter faced due south, was within about twenty yards of the line, and its commonplace face, was almost concealed by a thick veil of crimson roses. Outside, on a reversed bucket, sat a slender, auburn-haired, young woman. She was knitting a black stocking, and endeavoring to keep order between four lively children—a puppy—and a singed white cat, as well as a mixed multitude of presumptuous poultry—who crowded around, watching her every movement, with expectant attention. She raised her head, then rose to her feet, as we approached, greeting Dolly with a radiant glance. So this was Mary Slattery! Yes; and although not locally credited with

"looks" she was undeniably pretty, nay even beautiful; with clear-cut high-bred features, and for all her peasant's clothes, an *aristocrat*, to the tips of her little pink fingers!

"Ah thin! sure it's too kind of your ladyship to be thinking of these children," she exclaimed with a wonderful smile, that lit up her whole face. (Her ladyship's smile!) Johnny, will yer take yer hand out of yer mouth, and say thank ye nicely to the lady?" for Johnny had clutched the paper bag in a vice-like grip, evidently cakes were a rare prize!

"You will share it with your brother, and sisters, won't you?" pleaded Dolly in a coaxing key.

"An' to be sure he will; and bye maybe a bit for the dog, and the cat too. *He's* no nagur," boasted his mother, as she carefully portioned out the cakes among her clamorous offspring, whilst the chickens gathered anxiously around,—hoping for crumbs.

"This is my brother-in-law," said Dolly, introducing me at last.

"I'm glad to see yer honor, and hope ye have had sport galore," she said.

"Pretty well I thank you," I replied. "How do you like living so close to the rail, Mrs. Slattery?"

"Faix, I like it well enough, sir; it's gay, to see the trains going by—four a day—and two on Sunday, foreby the goods."

"And do you mind the gate?"

"Yes, when Mick is up the lines—that's himself," now pointing to a good-looking man, with a shock of dark hair, who was busily occupied in digging potatoes.

"Do you eat many potatoes?" asked my sister.

"Augh no," with a gesture of abhorrence, "I hate potatoes, they just choke me—and when our bag of flour went astray on the train, ere last week, I was daggin round for something to keep me alive—so I was! I'd die—on—potatoes."

"And what did you find?" I said.

"Ned Macarthy give me a couple of salmon trout: I've rather a delicate stomach—(wid respect to you)—I never can stir in the morning, till Mick makes me a cup of tay."

"Then do you mean to say, your husband gets up, and lights the fire, and boils the kettle?" cried Dolly in great surprise. Nothing would induce *her* husband to do so, as she and I well knew!

"Oh, Mick is very good to me," she confessed with a complacent smile—"sure he knows, I'm not up to much!" Here Mick himself arrived, with a basket, and touching his hat to us, said—

"Won't the lady come in, and take a sate, and a cup of milk? Mary, me girl, where's your manners?" It struck *me*, that Mary would have infinitely preferred to lounge outside, knitting and talking, and had evidently not the true Irish instinct, which instantly offers a welcome, a seat, and if possible,—refreshment.

"Ah sure, the house is all upset, and through-other," she answered, reluctantly opening the door, as she spoke, "and not fit for company. Still, I'll be proud, if the lady will walk in, and sit down."

On this invitation, we both walked in, and the dirtiness of the abode, fully justified old Pat's strictures—it was scandalous!

The room was a good size—the furniture strong and useful, but the fire was dead out; a pot hung over a pile of white ashes, a tub with a half-washed pair of corduroy trousers, stood in the middle of the floor—a variety of cups and saucers unwashed, studded the table, and the ground, littered with sticks, and cabbage leaves, was badly in need of sweeping. Mary Slattery's little hands, were evidently incapable of rough work, but I noticed some futile efforts at decoration; the dresser exhibited some gaudy delf, and various cracked pieces of crockery. There stood a huge bunch of wild flowers, in a

tin porringer, and the walls exhibited a considerable gallery, of colored pictures, from the illustrated papers. The window curtains were looped back, and that in the most approved fashion; yet I descried an old goat under the stairs, and a clocking hen, behind the door.

Meanwhile Mick made a desperate effort to "redd up" the place. He carried away the tub, chased forth the goat—put forward two chairs, and endeavored with the whole strength of his lungs, to rekindle a few sods among the pile of turf ashes. All this time, Mary his wife, with true patrician unconcern, stood knitting and talking to Dolly, precisely as if she were receiving her, amidst the most luxurious surroundings—and absolutely unconscious of *any* shortcomings.

Now, if she had been a true-born Irish woman, she would have been pouring forth an irrepressible torrent, of excellent, and plausible excuses. And here, to me, was an incontrovertible proof, that in Mary

Slattery's veins, ran no Foley blood, but that she was the descendant of a colder race,—daughter of a hundred earls! As she conversed, with serene nonchalance, her four little bright-eyed children, with high-bridged noses, watched us with unchallenged curiosity, whilst they munched their stale sponge cakes. Dolly, who was impetuous and voluble, made wonderful use of her tongue, and I on my part made use of my eyes. The young woman leaning against the dresser, was plainly not in keeping with her background: her pose was grace itself, unconscious and unstudied,—possibly the heritage of centuries of court life, and elaborate courtesies. Her short blue cotton skirts, revealed a pair of black woolen stockings, and cobbler's shoes, but even these, failed to conceal, the high arched instep, and slim little foot; and the hands that twinkled among the flying knitting needles, might have been painted by Vandyke; so delicate, taper, and absolutely

useless, did they look ! Mary Slattery had a sweet voice, and a pleasant and melodious brogue, and she and Dolly had much to say to one another. Dolly talked away, asked astonishing questions, and listened in return, to accounts of funerals, and wakes, dances, matches, and matchmakers.

"Them matchmakers, does go up and down the country making matches," said Mrs. Slattery. "One of the pair, must have land, and the other money, and when it is all fixed, the young man comes to the house one evening; they are married, at once, and if they are well liked,—get a great drag home."

"But if the young man does not fancy the girl, what happens?" asked my sister.

"Oh, he makes an excuse, but that's very seldom," replied the other, "and the girl never. The old people take the money and clear out; the young ones has the farm, and works it. The matches

answer well enough, but I knew a boy once, who never seen the girl till the morning they were married. Faix, he was not too well satisfied!" and she gave a mischievous laugh.

"I am sure *your* match, was not made in that fashion," boldly announced Dolly.

"In troth then, an' it was not," replied Mrs. Slattery with vivacity. "Mick and I were at school together, and I was before him in the books. Wasn't I now, Mick?"

"Bedad, ye were before me in everything," he answered with a sheepish grin. "I often wondered, where she got her brains from! She's mad for reading," he continued proudly, "and she'd be stuck in a book, all day long if she could get hold of one."

"What part of Ireland do you come from, Mrs. Slattery?" continued Dolly. "You are not Kerry at any rate. Any one can see *that!*"

"'Deed then I am, ma'am," she replied emphatically. "And where else? Why wouldn't I be Kerry, born and bred?"

"Because you are so unlike the other people, who have dark hair and blue or gray eyes, and are more strongly built, and you——"

"Oh yes," she interrupted, "I'm aware I'm different; very small-sized, wid red hair, and brown eyes, and no color to speak of, but it's just a chancy thing, like a piebald horse, or a blue-eyed cat! We can't be all cut out on wan pattern—there's the childer too. None av them favors no one," pointing to the four intent faces, and fine aristocratic noses, just visible above the half-door. "I don't know, how on the living earth, they come by their looks. Their fine soft hair, and their little ears—aye—and their queer tempers. Come in here to me, Micky," she added suddenly, "and pull a good few roses, for the lady."

Micky immediately obeyed, and pres-

ently entered, bearing a large straggling bunch, which he at once offered to my sister without the least *mauvaise honte*, and the air of a little gentleman.

"That's the boy!" cried his mother approvingly. He was a handsome well-made fellow, with a square chin, and clear hazel eyes, that looked you full in the face.

"Thank you, Mick," said Dolly. "How old are you?"

"Ten, mam."

"And going to school of course?"

"Oh yes, I'm in the third book."

"What are you going to be, when you grow up?"

"A soldier."

"Oh there'll be two words to that," protested his mother. "What put soldiers, in yer head, Micky ava?"

"I don't know rightly!" and he colored up. "I think they were always there. Mammy, there's a goods coming!" and he ran out.

Mrs. Slattery instantly laid down her knitting, and hurried after him.

"Are you not afraid of something happening to the children?" I asked, as we rose and followed her. "You are so close to the line."

"Indeed, and I was, sir, when they were little," she said. "I once got a terrible fright with Johnny, I'd only just time to tear him off the ground, ere the train passed. I was away at the back, feeding the pig, when I saw the train coming very fast, and he had crawled out of his bed, and on to the rails. Holy Mary! but I ran that day. I tell you, the fright knocked the heart out of me!"

"Oh dear, I declare it is six o'clock, and we must be going," suddenly announced Dolly, looking at her watch. "We shall just have time to run across, before you shut the gates. Good-by to you all—*au revoir!*"

She hurried over, and stood, and nodded back to Mary, whilst I dragged

forward, and shut the two heavy gates; for which service I was rewarded with a brilliant smile, and a demure little courtesy —and that, was the last I saw, of, "Lady Mary Slattery."

"Well," exclaimed Dolly, as we turned our backs on the railway, and our faces towards a long stretch of heather, and furze, bounded by a noble range of mountains, "tell me frankly, what you think of her? Is she not beautiful? has she not an extraordinary air of refinement, and distinction?"

"Oh yes,—she's uncommon looking, and all that," I muttered in reply.

"Did you notice, her low voice, and her odd slow smile,—a family smile I should imagine,—and yet of course, I'm talking the most arrant nonsense! Can you believe, that her mother was some old Kerry woman who dug potatoes, and smoked a pipe? Come now, can you?" she repeated.

"No, I cannot," I answered doggedly.

"And yet, there is her husband, and her barefooted children, just peasants; and she talks of a rise of eighteenpence a week to Mick, as if it were the utmost bounds of her ambition. The first time, I was there, I gave her a sovereign; and you should have seen, how she colored up with pleasure, though she did not *say* much; and I almost felt as if I were giving it to an equal. One would take her for a lady, if she were dressed up—a somebody—in fact."

"In fact, Lady Mary Slattery,"—I mentally added, and we walked on in silence, for some time. The Mortimers were a notoriously haughty family; ancient, exclusive, and wealthy—they had dwindled down to one rather frail old branch. What would the Earl of Mortimer say, to this Irish heiress, who fed pigs, and washed, and cooked (very badly) had adopted the religion, language, prejudices and accomplishments of a Kerry peasant; who was the wife of a Kerry working

man, mother of four fine Kerry children? Could she ever be trained, educated, transformed, and fitted for her high degree?—never.

"Come, you have not opened your lips for half a mile," broke in Dolly impatiently. "A penny for your thoughts—what are you thinking about?"

"That I hope we shall have cranberry tart for dinner," was my mendacious answer.

"Oh, you greedy person! I fancied you might be puzzling out the enigma of the young woman, at the crossing? I must confess that she baffles *me*. She is not the least like any country woman, I've ever seen."

Should I tell Dolly or not—no.

"She's a physiological freak—she's a white crow—what business has she to feed pigs with those little taper hands? Tell me that?"

For my part, I was not disposed to tell her *anything;* Dolly had an active and

eloquent tongue, an insatiable curiosity,—a world-wide correspondence. Why should *I* rake up old ashes, and possibly embroil myself with Lord Mortimer, and his friends? Silence is golden. No, I would not speak. I would leave Lady Mary, as I found her,—to her wash-tub and her gate! She appeared to be perfectly satisfied with that state of life into which God had called her, and who was I, that I should interfere? Nevertheless, I entertain no shadow of doubt, as to her identity; and feel a profound conviction, that old Katey's story, was *true* after all!

THE GLEN LAMMIE SHOOTING.

PART V.

THE historical feud between two surviving branches of the Crayshaw family was now in its third generation, its origin being wrapped in a considerable degree of mystery. Some believed it to be due to the inevitable lady, others gave the credit to a legacy—a *cow* had even been mentioned as the object of dispute—but those who spoke with authority, attributed the rise and progress of a very bitter family quarrel, to rival claims of precedence in the ancestral vault ;—than which, there is no more deadly source of jealous contention, or deeply-rooted animosity. A dispute, regarding a right of way, and two expensive lawsuits, had kept the embers briskly supplied with fuel—the lawyers saw to that—and provided brands, in the shape

of irritating documents and bickering letters respecting leases, claims, repairs, and interest, as, unfortunately, the surviving Crayshaws drew their income from the same source.

And it was naturally a still further aggravation, that the Colonel's eldest son, Wilfred, was heir to the whole of Mr. Peter Crayshaw's fine landed estate—not to speak of pictures and diamonds. Mr. Crayshaw was a widower of fifty odd years, a dapper little man with a pair of quick blue eyes, small gray whiskers, and a long, clean-shaven upper lip. He was an excellent landlord, a keen sporstman, an indulgent parent, and a ruthless enemy. Most of his life had been spent at Crayshaw Court, a stately place in the Midlands, where he sat upon the Bench, and ruled over his tenantry and neighbors, but his eldest daughter, Petronella, ruled over *him*. Petronella (family name) was a beautiful, spirited girl, of one-and-twenty, with marvelously eloquent dark

eyes, and a bewitching smile. She was a capital housekeeper, horsewoman, and hostess, entered into her father's pursuits with zest, and shared his tastes and distastes, including an inveterate detestation of the "Johns." Sally, her sister, was neither so brilliant nor independent, but she was sufficiently well-favored to admit of the girls being termed "the pretty Miss Crayshaws."

Colonel John Crayshaw, who resembled his cousin in stature, temper, and an ardent taste for sport, had spent most of his life in the Indian Staff Corps, and had but recently retired and settled down with his wife in London. Their family consisted of three sons—Wilfred, a captain in the Gunners, Horace, a subaltern in a regiment of Bengal Lancers, and Tom, who was still at Charterhouse. The young people of both branches, had always been brought up in the belief that everything their hereditary enemies did *must* be wrong. They had never met, and had no

desire to do so, yet, strange to say, took a certain fearful interest in one another's proceedings. Through the means of connections, they were fairly well posted up in mutual doings—yes, and worse still, sayings;—and surreptitious but vigorous rivalry was the result.

If the "Peters" fished in Ireland, the "Johns" immediately took a river in Norway. If the "Johns" fared to Bath for the waters, the "Peters" resorted to Homburg. Last year, when Colonel Crayshaw was reported to be seeking a moor in Scotland for the benefit of his two soldier sons (home on leave), Mr. Crayshaw lost no time in securing one of the most famous moors in Perthshire, and issuing invitations to a certain number of guns. He was a far-seeing, practical little man, and, before the great rush grouseward commenced, set forth with his household, stores, and guests for Glen Lammie; the remote lodge which was to be his home for the next two months.

eyes, and a bewitching smile. She was a capital housekeeper, horsewoman, and hostess, entered into her father's pursuits with zest, and shared his tastes and distastes, including an inveterate detestation of the "Johns." Sally, her sister, was neither so brilliant nor independent, but she was sufficiently well-favored to admit of the girls being termed "the pretty Miss Crayshaws."

Colonel John Crayshaw, who resembled his cousin in stature, temper, and an ardent taste for sport, had spent most of his life in the Indian Staff Corps, and had but recently retired and settled down with his wife in London. Their family consisted of three sons—Wilfred, a captain in the Gunners, Horace, a subaltern in a regiment of Bengal Lancers, and Tom, who was still at Charterhouse. The young people of both branches, had always been brought up in the belief that everything their hereditary enemies did *must* be wrong. They had never met, and had no

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ently entered, bearing a large straggling bunch, which he at once offered to my sister without the least *mauvaise honte*, and the air of a little gentleman.

"That's the boy!" cried his mother approvingly. He was a handsome well-made fellow, with a square chin, and clear hazel eyes, that looked you full in the face.

"Thank you, Mick," said Dolly. "How old are you?"

"Ten, mam."

"And going to school of course?"

"Oh yes, I'm in the third book."

"What are you going to be, when you grow up?"

"A soldier."

"Oh there'll be two words to that," protested his mother. "What put soldiers, in yer head, Micky ava?"

"I don't know rightly!" and he colored up. "I think they were always there. Mammy, there's a goods coming!" and he ran out.

Mrs. Slattery instantly laid down her knitting, and hurried after him.

"Are you not afraid of something happening to the children?" I asked, as we rose and followed her. "You are so close to the line."

"Indeed, and I was, sir, when they were little," she said. "I once got a terrible fright with Johnny, I'd only just time to tear him off the ground, ere the train passed. I was away at the back, feeding the pig, when I saw the train coming very fast, and he had crawled out of his bed, and on to the rails. Holy Mary! but I ran that day. I tell you, the fright knocked the heart out of me!"

"Oh dear, I declare it is six o'clock, and we must be going," suddenly announced Dolly, looking at her watch. "We shall just have time to run across, before you shut the gates. Good-by to you all—*au revoir!*"

She hurried over, and stood, and nodded back to Mary, whilst I dragged

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The interloper listened gravely to this tirade, then turned to a good-looking young fellow, who had entered, and was wringing out his wet cap.

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The guests were near (and dear) neighbors—Sir George Kerr and Major Metcalfe, middle-aged men, but first-class shots, tough and hardy as any gillies, and extremely keen to test the celebrated Glen Lammie shooting, and see if it was worthy of its high reputation. Two other guns were to follow by the Twelfth, and Mr. Crayshaw was looking forward to despatching an account of "a record bag" to an early issue of the *Scotsman* and *Field*. Between Perth and Glen Lammie lay nineteen weary miles, the journey being accomplished in a roomy wagonette drawn by a pair of stout Scotch horses. Servants, baggage, guns, and dogs preceded the party in other vehicles, and quite an imposing cortége wound its way among hills and glens, *en route* for the moor.

After a tedious journey on the hard highroad, the cavalcade turned off abruptly through a gate, and entered upon a grassy cart track, which led them along

the winding course of an eager, shallow river; over breezy moors, and across crazy wooden bridges, ever bringing them nearer to a wild, romantic region enclosed by towering hills—glens from which two hundred gallant Highlanders had once sallied forth to fight and die for Bonnie Prince Charlie. In the golden August afternoon, the scenery was supremely lovely; shifting shadows chased one another across the mountains, which were clothed with heather so dense, and of such vivid coloring, that it looked as if some legendary giant had been spreading splendid carpets of imperial purple. Here and there a grouse rose (to the great encouragement of the guns), a flock of plover wheeled by, or a stray seagull flapped lazily across the track; there was not a sound to break the silence of this, the very heart of the hills, save the call of a blackcock and the song of the river (which same shallow river, dancing over the rocks and stones to its own merry tune, came

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of people present, half of whom were wet and famished, and all, indignant and bewildered.

"Oh it's quite easily explained," said Wilfred Crayshaw, gallantly, throwing himself into the breach. He was a handsome, well-set-up young man, with a bold and merry blue eye, who had already seen some service, and sported a bit of ribbon, and was now called upon to lead a domestic forlorn hope. "There has evidently been a blunder about the name, sir. The house agents supposed we were all the same family. We have no wish to intrude——"

"Whatever happens, *I* am going to stay," interrupted a clear, female voice from the depths of a hood. Then two tiny hands were lifted, and a pretty little woman with bright dark eyes and gray hair sat revealed. "I would not face the drive back in the darkness, and over those broken bridges, for anything I could be offered, and I am so tired I can hardly

see. If the mistake *is* ours, I don't believe that *even* Mr. Peter Crayshaw would turn a dog out on such a night, and, with his permission, I will sit in the coach-house, or preferably in the kitchen, till morning."

And now Petronella rose to the occasion. She came forward out of the crowd, a tall, graceful, dark-eyed girl in white, and said—

"Allow me to take you to your room at once, Mrs. Crayshaw. My father will look after every one, and see that they have something to eat. We have only just sat down to dinner. Afterwards the shooting rights can be discussed, but just at present dry clothes and food are more important."

"Petronella," gasped her father, coming out of a sort of stupor, and meeting her significant glance, "you—you—you——"

"Express your wishes as usual, dear daddy, don't I?" and Petronella's dark eyes spoke a whole volume of entreaty.

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lodge in the wake of the heavily-laden ponies; the two rivals walked with undeniable stiffness, and Wilfred's face, was almost copper color—they had all been "shooting up."

The three ladies hastened out to greet the guns, and watched with the keenest interest the panniers being slowly unloaded, and brace after brace of fat brown birds deposited upon the-grass. On a hill just above the house, a shepherd sat playing the bagpipes, and his plaintive, wailing-strains mingled with the monotonous counting of two gillies. At last the panniers were pronounced empty, the critical moment had arrived, and the head keeper unconsciously delivered the verdict.

"Mr. Crayshaw's party, seventy and a half brace of grouse, eleven hares, one rabbit, one hawk, and one cuckoo. Colonel Crayshaw's party, seventy-two brace grouse, eight hares, and two gray hens."

At the latter item, there was a stifled murmur among the retainers; a gray hen

occupies on a moor, the status of a fox in a hunting county !

"Very close, almost even," exclaimed the Colonel. "For *we* are handicapped by the two gray hens."

"Well, at any rate, the moor is yours," said Mr. Crayshaw, in a low voice. Then with a short nod, he turned on his heel, and tramped into the house, there, doubtless, to muse on fate and fortune.

In spite of the packing to which she had alluded, Petronella contrived to come down to dinner in her favorite frock, and Sir George noticed that Captain Crayshaw sported a bit of white heather in his buttonhole. During the meal Mr. Crayshaw sat silent, not to say solemn, though occasionally roused to animation when the day's sport was in question. After the servants had retired, and dessert was on the table, Colonel Crayshaw rose from his chair and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to say that I've never enjoyed a better day's shooting than this 12th of

August. I am pleased to have made the acquaintance of my cousins, I should be glad to cultivate their friendship, and I propose, that Mr. Crayshaw and his daughters do us the pleasure of remaining at Glen Lammie, that we share the lodge and shooting, and become, as the agent believed us to be, all one happy family."

As he concluded, the piper suddenly began to play a rousing pibroch outside the windows.

Mr. Peter Crayshaw, who was exceedingly proud of his own faculty for running off neat little speeches, immediately got on his legs, and made a most suitable and handsome rejoinder. Thus the thing was done; in five minutes the feud of a century was ended! Mr. Crayshaw had taken a fancy to his heir. His heir, had taken a fancy to Petronella. Is it not extraordinary, how easily affairs arrange themselves, when the ladies of the family are of one accord, and the men have hereditary tastes, politics, and ailments?

Before long the two Crayshaws called one another "John," "Peter," and "My dear fellow." Captain Crayshaw and Petronella called one another—but, no, that would be indiscreet. This climax, was reached after a Sunday afternoon's ramble, when they lost themselves among bens and glens, bracken and heather, and wandered home, just in time, to meet and reassure, an anxious search party.

The ensuing weeks upon the moor, were absolutely idyllic,—both for lovers and sportsmen. Fine weather favored them, there were wonderful grouse and hare drives, and the Glen Lammie bag, proved phenomenal! The off-days were devoted to picnics and fishing, and lazy excursions among the mountain streams, and secluded little rock-fringed tarns.

When it was first noised abroad, that two families of Crayshaw had actually rented the same moor, the tale was received with scornful gibes or angry derision (especially by their lawyers), and a

man, who swore to seeing the whole party lunching together merrily, at Perth Station, was hooted for his pains.

But by degrees it became known, that the ancient enemies were now the best of friends, that Petronella Crayshaw was to marry her father's heir—the record bag and the announcement of the engagement appeared simultaneously in the same paper,—and that every one was delighted with every one else, and ridiculously enraptured at the match!

One matter, however, has yet to be explained, and respecting this particular question, there is a vast amount of not unnatural curiosity. How came the two deadly enemies to share the same shooting? This the land and estate agent alone could divulge; but for obvious reasons, he is not likely to reveal the fact, that he let Glen Lammie Moor to two parties; the more so, as he is not aware, that his blunder has been the means of converting two parties, into one!

"AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION."

PART VI.

"To let furnished, for a term of years, at a very low rental, a desirable old-fashioned family residence, comprising eleven bedrooms, four reception-rooms, dressing-rooms, two staircases, complete servants' offices, ample accommodation for a gentleman's establishment, including six-stall stable, coach-house, etc."

For a period extending over some years, this notice appeared spasmodically in the various daily papers. Occasionally you saw it running for a week or a fortnight at a stretch,—as if it were resolved to force itself into consideration by sheer persistency. Sometimes for months I looked for it in vain. Other ignorant folk might possibly fancy that the efforts of the

house-agent had been at last crowned with success—that it was let, and no longer in the market.

I knew better; I knew that this old-fashioned residence would never, never find a tenant as long as oak and ash endured. I knew, that it was passed on as a hopeless case, from house-agent to house-agent. I knew, that it would never be occupied, save by rats—and, more than this,—I knew the reason why!

I will not divulge in what square, street, or road, this "bargain" may be found, nor will I impart to human being, its precise and exact locality, but this I'm prepared to state, that it is positively in existence, is in London—and is still empty.

.

Twenty years ago, this coming Christmas, my friend John Hollyoak—a civil engineer—and I, were guests at a bachelor's party; partaking in company with eight other celibates, of a very *recherché*

little dinner, in the neighborhood of Piccadilly. Conversation became brisk as the champagne circulated, and many subjects were started and discussed.

They (I say *they* advisedly, as I myself, am a man of few words,) talked on an extraordinary variety of subjects.

I distinctly recollect a long argument on mushrooms,— mushrooms, murders, racing, cholera ; from cholera we came to sudden death, from sudden death to churchyards, and from churchyards—it was naturally but a step to ghosts.

On this latter topic, argument became heated and furious, for the company was divided into two camps. The larger, the opposition who sneered, scoffed and laughed with irritating contempt at the mere name of ghosts, was headed by John Hollyoak ; the smaller party, who were dogged, angry, and prepared to back their opinions to any extent, had for their leader, our host, a bald-headed man of business, whom I certainly would have

credited (as I mentally remarked) with more sense.

The believers in the supernatural, obtained a hearing, so far as to relate one or two blood-curdling, first or second-hand experiences, which, when concluded, instead of being received with an awe-struck and respectful silence, were pooh-poohed with shouts of laughter, and taunting suggestions, that were by no means complimentary to the intelligence or sobriety, of the victims of superstition. Argument and counter-argument, waxed louder and hotter, and there was every prospect of a right stormy conclusion to the evening's entertainment.

Hollyoak, who was the most vehement, most incredulous, most jocular, and most derisive of the anti-ghost faction, brought matters to a climax, by declaring, that nothing would give him greater satisfaction than to pass a night in a haunted house—and the worse its character, the better he would be pleased.

His challenge was instantly accepted by our somewhat ruffled host, who warmly assured him, that his wishes could be gratified, and he would be accommodated with a night's lodging in a haunted house within twenty-four hours—in fact, in a house of such a desperate reputation, that even the adjoining mansions stood vacant.

He then proceeded to give a brief outline of this notorious abode. It had once been the town residence of a well-known county family, much given to gambling for high stakes, but what evil events had happened therein, tradition did not relate.

On the death of the last owner,—an aged person, unpleasantly resembling the typical wizard,—it had passed into the hands of a kinsman, resident abroad, who had no wish to return to England, and who desired his agents to let it, if they could,—a most significant proviso.

Year by year went by, and still this

" highly desirable family mansion " could find no tenant, although the rent was reduced and reduced, and again reduced to almost zero.

The most alarming whispers were afloat —the most terrible experiences were actually proclaimed on the housetops.

No tenant would remain, even *gratis ;* and for the last ten years this " handsome, desirable family residence " had been the abode of rats by day, and something else by night—so said the neighbors.

Of course, it offered the ideal opportunity for John, and he snatched up the gauntlet on the spot, scoffed at its evil repute, and promised to rehabilitate its character within a week.

It was in vain, that he was solemnly warned, that one of his fellow-guests gravely assured him " that he would not pass a night in the house for fifty thousand pounds—it would be the price of his reason."

" You value your reason at a very high

figure," replied John, with a sarcastic smile. "Now, I, will venture mine for nothing."

"Those laugh who win," put in our host sharply; "you have not been through the wood yet, though your name *is* Hollyoak. I invite all present to dine with me in three days from this; and then, if our friend here has proved that he has got the better of the spirits, we will laugh together. Is that a bargain?"

The invitation was promptly accepted by the whole company; and then they fell to making practical arrangements for John's lodging for the next night.

I had no actual hand—or, more properly speaking, tongue—in this discussion, which carried us on till a late hour; but nevertheless, the following night at ten o'clock,—for no ghost with any self-respect would think of appearing before that time—I found myself standing, as John's second, on the steps of the notorious abode; I was not going to remain; the

hansom that brought us, was to take me back to my own respectable chambers.

The ill-fated house, was large, solemn-looking and gloomy ; and its heavy portico, frowned down, on neighboring bare-faced hall-doors. The caretaker—an army pensioner, bravest of the brave in daylight —was prudently awaiting us outside, with a key, which said key he turned in the lock, and admitted us into a great echoing hall, black as Erebus, saying as he did so : "My missus has haired the bed, and made up a good fire in the first front, sir. Your things is all laid hout, and" (dubiously to John) "I hope you'll have a comfortable night, sir."

"No, sir. Thank you, sir. Excuse me, I'll not come in. Good night," and with the words still on his lips, he clattered down the steps with most indecent haste and—vanished.

"And of course, *you* will not come in either," said John. "It is not in the bond ! and I prefer to face them alone,"

and he laughed contemptuously,—a laugh that had a curious echo, it struck me at the time. A laugh, strangely repeated, with an unpleasant mocking emphasis.

"Call for me, alive or dead, at eight o'clock to-morrow morning," he added, pushing me forcibly out into the porch, and closing the door with a heavy reverberating clang, a clang that sounded halfway down the street.

I *did* call for him the next morning as desired, in company with the army pensioner, who, when my friend emerged, stared at Hollyoak's every-day, self-possessed appearance, with an expression of respectful astonishment.

"So it was all humbug, of course!" I said, as he took my arm, and we set off for our club.

"You shall hear the whole story, when we have had something to eat," he replied somewhat impatiently. "It will keep till after breakfast—I'm famishing."

I remarked that he looked unusually

grave, as we chatted over our broiled fish, and omelet, and that occasionally his attention seemed wandering,—to say the least of it! The moment he had brought out his cigar-case, and "lit up," he turned to me, and said—

"I see you are just quivering to know my experience, and I won't keep you on tenterhooks any longer! In four words —I have seen them!"

I am—as before hinted—a silent man. I merely looked at him with widely-parted mouth, and staring interrogative eyes.

I believe I had best endeavor to give the narrative without comment, and in John Hollyoak's own way. This is, as well as I can recollect, his experience word for word :—

"I proceeded up-stairs, after I had shut you out, lighting my way by a match, and found the front room easily, as the door was ajar, and it was lit up by a roaring and most cheerful looking fire, and two wax candles. It was a comfortable apart-

ment, furnished with old-fashioned chairs and tables, and the traditional four-poster. There were numerous doors, which proved to be cupboards; and when I had executed a rigorous search in each of these closets and locked them, and investigated the bed above and beneath, sounded the walls, and bolted the door, I sat down before the fire, lit a cigar, opened a book, and felt that I was going to be master of the situation, and most thoroughly and comfortably 'at home.' My novel proved absorbing, I read on greedily, chapter after chapter, and so interested was I, and amused,—for it was a lively book, —that I positively lost sight of my whereabouts, and fancied myself in my own chambers. There was not a sound—not even a mouse, in the wainscot. The coals dropping from the grate, alone occasionally broke the silence, till a neighboring church clock slowly boomed 'twelve.'

"'*The hour!*' I said to myself. 'Now for the man!' as I gave the fire a rousing

poke, and commenced a fresh chapter; but ere I had read three pages, I had occasion to pause, and listen. What was that indistinct sound gradually coming nearer and nearer? 'Rats, of course,' said Common-sense—'it was just the house for vermin.' Then a longish silence. Again a stir, sounds approaching, as if apparently caused by many feet passing down the corridor—high-heeled shoes, the sweeping swish of silken trains. Of course it was all imagination, I assured myself—or rats. Rats, were capable of making such improbable noises!

"Then another icy silence. No sound but cinders, and the ticking of my watch, —which I had laid upon the table.

"I resumed my book, rather ashamed, and a little indignant with myself for having neglected it, and calmly dismissed my late interruption as 'rats—nothing but rats.'

"I had been reading and smoking for a considerable time, in a placid and highly

incredulous frame of mind, when I was somewhat rudely startled by a loud single knock at my room door ! I took no notice of it, but merely laid down my novel, and sat tight. Another knock, more imperious this time. After a moment's mental deliberation, I arose, armed myself with the poker,—prepared to brain any number of rats,—and threw the door open with a violent swing, that strained its very hinges. There stood, to my amazement, a tall powdered footman in a laced scarlet livery, who making a formal inclination of his head, astonished me still further by saying—

" ' Dinner is ready, sir ! '

" ' I'm not coming,' I replied, without a moment's hesitation, and thereupon I slammed the door in his face, locked it and resumed my seat, also my book ; but reading was a farce ; my ears were aching for the next sound.

" It came soon—rapid steps running up the stairs, and again a single knock. I

went over to the door, and once more discovered the tall footman, who repeated with a studied courtesy—

"'Dinner is ready, and the company are waiting.'

"'I told you I was not coming. Be off, and be damned to you,' I cried, again shutting the door violently.

"This time I did not make even a pretense at reading, I merely sat and waited for the next move.

"I had not long to sit! In ten minutes I heard a third loud summons. I rose, went to the door and tore it open. There, as I expected, was the same flunkey, with his parrot speech!

"'Dinner is ready, the company are waiting, and the master says you must come.'

"'All right then, I'll come,' I replied, feeling suddenly fired with a desire to see the end of the adventure—and be done with it.

"The footman immediately led the way

down-stairs, and I followed him, noting as I went, the gilt buttons on his coat, and his splendidly turned calves, also that the hall and passages were now brilliantly illuminated; that several liveried servants were passing to and fro, and that from—presumably—the dining-room, there issued a buzz of tongues, loud volleys of laughter, many hilarious voices, and a clatter of knives and forks. I was not afforded much time for speculation, as in another second, I found myself inside the door, and my escort announced me, in a stentorian voice, as 'Mr. Hollyoak.'

"I could hardly credit my senses, as I gazed round, and beheld about two dozen people, dressed in a fashion of the last century, seated at the table, which was loaded with gold and silver plate, and lighted up by a blaze of wax candles in massive candelabra.

"A swarthy elderly gentleman, who presided at the head of the board, rose deliberately as I entered. He was dressed

in a crimson coat, braided with silver. He wore a peruke, had the most piercing black eyes I ever encountered, made me the finest bow I ever received in all my life, and with a polite wave of a taper hand, indicated my seat—a vacant chair between two powdered and patched beauties, with overflowing white shoulders, and necks sparkling with diamonds.

"At first, I was fully convinced that the whole affair was a superbly matured, practical joke! Everything looked so real, so truly flesh and blood, so complete in every detail; but I gazed around in vain, for one familiar face.

"I saw young, old, and elderly; handsome, and the reverse. On all faces, there was a similar expression—reckless, hardened defiance, and something else, that made me shudder, but that I could neither classify nor define.

"Were they a secret community? Burglars or coiners? But no; in one rapid glance, I noticed that they belonged

exclusively to the upper stratum of society —*bygone* society! The jabber of talking had momentarily ceased, and the host, imperiously hammering the table with a knife handle, said in a singularly harsh, grating voice—

"'Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to give you a toast. Our guest,' looking straight at me with his glittering coal-black eyes.

"Every glass was immediately raised. Twenty faces were turned towards mine, when happily a sudden impulse seized me. I sprang to my feet, and said.—

"'Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to thank you for your kind hospitality, but before I accept it, allow me to say grace.'

"I did not wait for permission, but hurriedly repeated a Latin benediction. Ere the last syllable was uttered, the lights were extinguished amidst a hideous uproar, there was a sound of running and screaming, of curses, and groans, followed by a dead silence. I found myself stand-

ing alone by the big mahogany table, which I could just dimly discern with the aid of a street lamp, that threw its meager rays into the great empty dining-room from the other side of the area—yes, the room was appallingly empty, and so still. I must confess, that I felt my nerves a good deal shaken, by this instantaneous change from light to darkness—from a crowd of gay and noisy companions, to utter solitude, and silence. I stood for a moment, trying to recover my mental balance. I rubbed my eyes hard, to assure myself that I was wide awake, and then I placed this very cigar-case in the middle of the table, as a sign and token that I had been down-stairs—which cigar-case I found exactly where I left it, this morning—and then went and groped my way into the hall and regained my room, through a darkness that seemed to press on me.

"I met with no obstruction *en route.* I saw no one, but as I closed, and double locked my door, I distinctly heard a low

laugh outside the keyhole—a sort of suppressed malicious titter,—that made me furious.

"I opened the door at once, but there was nothing to be seen. I waited and listened—nothing to be heard. I then undressed and went to bed, resolved that a whole army of footmen would fail to again allure me to that festive board. I was determined not to lose my night's rest —ghosts or no ghosts!

"Just as I was dozing off, I remember hearing the neighboring church clock chime two. It was the last sound I was aware of; the house was now as silent as a vault. My fire burnt away cheerfully. I was no longer in the least degree inclined for reading, and I fell fast asleep, and slept soundly till I heard the cabs, and milk-carts beginning their morning career.

"I then rose, dressed at my leisure, and discovered you, my good, faithful friend, awaiting me, rather anxiously, on the hall doorsteps.

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"'Dinner is ready, the company are waiting, and the master says you must come.'

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"A swarthy elderly gentleman, who presided at the head of the board, rose deliberately as I entered. He was dressed

"Buds," the young married women, the elder girls over thirty, the matrons bordering on forty, and the melancholy truth struck me like a stab. I *was* the oldest woman in the hotel!

"And what if I am?" I asked severely, again surveying Mr. Tunnycliffe,—whose embarrassment was very painful to witness, as he stood before me twisting his handkerchief into a sort of string.

"You've got a kind face," he blurted out, "and"—glancing at my black gown —"I reckon *you* have been through trouble."

Once again this daring young man was right. I had come to this the most renowned and beautiful health-resort in California, with its palace-like hotel, and terraced flower-gardens, in order to rest and recuperate after months of anxious nursing, and a sore bereavement. I felt nerve-benumbed and depressed, and I kept myself somewhat aloof from the gay chattering company which surrounded

me, living with my own thoughts, and more or less in the past. I am naturally of a reserved and quiet character, and yet here was this young Mr. Tunnycliffe boldly climbing over all my barriers, and appealing to my sorrows, and my *age!*

"I want you to do something, Mrs. Beaumont," he continued.

"What is it?" I inquired tartly.

"To—well, I'm going to ask you a great favor. Will you just go up and do whatever you can for Mrs. Van Byl's husband?"

"Why, good land!" I cried, startled out of my composure, "I don't think you know what you are talking about! The woman's a widow—and no wonder!" As I spoke, I looked down the veranda, to where pretty Mrs. Van Byl, the giddiest of the whole company, was playing piquet with a Mr. Hirst, a florid person, who had plenty of dollars,—but little or no character.

"She is not a widow *yet*," rejoined my

companion significantly. "She soon will be—he is going fast."

"So is she," I exclaimed. "But you don't really mean, that she has a sick husband in this very hotel?"

"You wouldn't suspect it, would you?" he asked bitterly. "Arthur Van Byl and I were college chums, and he is here, in a terrible bad way. I'd go and sit with him if she'd let me, or if I'd be any mortal good—but a woman is best in a sick-room."

"His wife," I suggested gravely.

"Oh, his wife," he interrupted, "is neglecting him shamefully. It's perfectly pitiful to see him. There he lies most of the time alone, while she is away riding or driving with the fastest set in the place. She was out with Hirst yesterday from eleven o'clock till dinner-time, and never gave one thought to that poor sick fellow."

"Where are his relations?" I inquired. "Don't they know that he is very ill?"

"He hasn't got any except a half-

brother. I'll tell you the whole story," announced Mr. Tunnycliffe, suddenly drawing up a chair and seating himself with his back to the company. " It's like this: Arthur's people were consumptive, and died young. His half-brother, Hans Van Byl, took him on, and educated him first-class. He is very rich—Van Byl's steelworks, you know. He gave Arthur a billet as traveling agent, and sent him West for his health. When he was at Nashville he came across her," jerking his head sideways. "She is, as you see, really handsome. Her name was Waffles —she was clerk in a shoe-store."

" Oh ! " I ejaculated, for the Van Byls are people of good old family.

" Yes, he fell in love with her straight ; and she got him on the hook, and kept him wriggling there a matter of two years. His brother was dancing mad at the notion of the match, and awfully set against it ; but she's a smart girl, and carries things right through, and she married the poor

fellow four months ago. Presently his old lung-trouble came back, and they traveled up here. *He* has been in his room mostly ever since, but *she* is having a fairly good time."

"I don't see how I can interfere," I began.

"You'd see it all, plain as my hand, once you set eyes on him," he replied with vehemence. "He is too good for this world, and he thinks she is an angel."

"Humph!" I exclaimed, "scarcely a ministering angel?"

"No. She's a heartless, wicked, shameless—there! She's going at last. If you would only cross the saloon, you'd catch her in the vestibule, and—oh, Mrs. Beaumont, *you* know what to say!"

"She may snub me, and tell me to mind my own affairs."

"No she won't. Please do—do come," he urged eagerly, "for I feel that I can't bear to think of him lying there, deserted, and dying."

In the hall, as predicted, I came face to face with Mrs. Van Byl. She was a handsome young woman, beautifully dressed —her clothes had the right set—tall and slender, with great, soft, cow-like eyes rather wide apart, and exquisite complexion, a pair, of pouting lips the color of red sealing-wax, and little even teeth, which she showed when she laughed.

She laughed continually, but as I came upon her, her expression was glum and fretful; her lips were pursed up, as if she were about to taste something unpleasant. She looked slightly surprised when I accosted her, and said, "I am sorry to hear your husband is so poorly; I am well experienced with invalids. I wonder if I could help you, Mrs. Van Byl?"

"I declare you are real kind," she exclaimed. "I don't make much of a show in a sick-room, I'll allow, and I never calculated to turn nurse, when I married," she added with a frankness that was astonishing. "I'm sure Arthur will be glad

to have you sit with him a bit; he won't let me; he is afraid of my falling ill too, and says I must go out, and get the air and amuse myself, because I'm so young." —And *I*, was the oldest woman in the hotel.—"I'm just going to give him his food now, if you'll come with me."

We were walking along passages all the time she was speaking. At last she opened the door of a room; such a mean, low room, one of the cheapest in the place, and bare of any invalid comforts or little luxuries. On a narrow bed lay a young man of two-and-twenty with very blue eyes—such bright truthful eyes—and a remarkably ingenuous expression. He was the mere wreck of a handsome youth: his features were wasted, the hectic color on his sunken cheeks, and his painful struggles for breath, too surely indicated that that shabby camp cot, was his death-bed.

"I've brought Mrs. Beaumont to see you, Arty," explained his wife. "She's

a capital hand at nursing, and will stay with you whilst I'm out riding."

"Oh, it's too kind of you!" he gasped in a weak voice. "Really I don't like to keep any one shut up here. I make Lindy go out as much as possible; *she* must not get sick too, must she?" And his blue eyes dwelt upon her, with a rapture that was simply pathetic.

"I'm so thirsty," he murmured; "that lazy nigger never brought up my drink."

"Oh, well—I'll get it; but first of all, here is your food." And Mrs. Van Byl brought forward a bowl of half-cooked rice,—a most unappetizing dish! Nevertheless she made the poor fellow get it down best way he could, and said, as she took the bowl from him, "I'll send you up the lemonade as I go past the office."

"I'd like some iced milk punch," he gasped. "The doctor said——"

"I don't care what he said," she interrupted; "it is not good for you, dear, and the doctor has not got to *pay* for it," and

with a significant nod, bowl in hand, she stalked out, leaving me in sole charge of the sick-room.

"Poor girl!" exclaimed the invalid, "it's terribly hard on her; she is so young, and I broke down so soon. I cannot take her out riding or driving—yet—— Oh, if I could only get rid of this awful feeling of emptiness in my chest, this restlessness, and want of breath I'd be as well as ever." And the optimism of the consumptive, shone in his dark-blue eyes.

Presently I began to set the room to rights. I tidied away a torn dime novel, a fashion book, and a paper of candles. I fetched a fan, eau-de-Cologne, and oranges, and in the course of an hour, the sick man and I had become like two old friends. He talked to me of his mother and his stepbrother the millionaire,—who had been so greatly set against his marriage, but who had never seen Lindy. Of course, if he had, it would be different. He talked long, eagerly, rapturously of

her. What was the glamour that this bad woman had cast over this saintly man ?

I left him, with her praises on his lips, her name fondly uttered by his rattling breath ; it was seven o'clock, and she had not yet returned.

As time went on, Mrs. Van Byl became the scandal and byword of the hotel—and I became Mr. Van Byl's sick nurse ! In all the course of a fairly long life I never encountered any human being so superbly selfish, and absolutely indifferent to public opinion. She flirted, smoked, played stud-poker and billiards, enjoyed herself as exhaustively as if she were still Lindy Waffles, and had no poor, sick husband to claim her attention, or to weary for her company. She knew that whatever the " old cats and frumps," as she called the other women, might say or think, in Arty's eyes she could do no wrong ; and that a caress, and a few endearing epithets, made him ample amends for a whole day's cruel desertion. His was a lovely

character; he was a true, sweet-tempered unselfish boy, and I felt kind of drawn to him. When he got to know me pretty well he opened his mind to me, and in his heart I saw nothing but pure, good thoughts, and Lindy—Lindy transfigured by love! He told me all about his courtship and her constancy, of how vexed her people were when his brother would not acknowledge her, and how at first they had gotten the notion that *he* was the rich Van Byl. Instead of that, he was poor, and this illness of his was a great and unlooked-for expense.

Personally, I could not see where the expenses came in. He had no doctor in attendance and no delicacies—until I took him in hand; indeed, his wants were pitifully small. Such as they were, I gladly supplied them, telling him daring lies, at which his wife winked—and for which may Heaven forgive me!

Young Mr. Tunnycliffe and I had more than one interesting private conference.

He was exceedingly anxious to do his part, and blundered out an offer of "money."

"For I know he has been kept real short," he said; "and she, like Judas, keeps the purse."

"It's all right; he has everything he wants, I do assure you."

"Of course, I know you are a rich woman," he answered, "and spare nothing; but then I'm an old friend."

"Well, I'm old—and a friend," I retorted; "and you must just leave me to do all I can, for I consider it is a privilege to be his nurse."

"It won't be long *now*, I suppose?" he faltered.

"No," I replied; "but one never can tell; and he is so hopeful. He talks of what he will do when he gets better—next fall."

It was strange that I, who a few weeks previously was an absolute stranger to Arthur Van Byl, should be the one ap-

pointed to indicate—what he himself was the last to see—the approach of death. It was my hand, that traced a letter to his brother at his dictation—a letter imploring him to take Lindy under his care, and to be kind to her for his sake. "Soon," he added, "you will love her for *herself*. She is the best, the truest, the most devoted of wives." As I set down these lying words, and wrote this false character, my hand actually shook with the fury that consumed me; for I was aware that at that very moment, the "best of wives" was whirling unwearily in the great saloon, the most reckless of a rowdy crew of dancers, and that this appeal, which *I* was the instrument of making, would secure the heartless wretch's future welfare.

Only once, did I ever see Lindy not absolutely perfect in her husband's eyes. When I entered his room one afternoon I discovered Mrs. Van Byl figuring in a new black gown—an open box, and paper wrappings lay scattered about the floor.

As she stood before the glass, smoothing down the folds, she turned her head, and said to me—

"Look, Mrs. Beaumont, don't it fit just beautiful?"

I felt a shiver run through me, as she spoke.

"Oh, Lindy!" he cried, in a tone of anguished remonstrance. "Don't do that to-day! I'll *soon* be gone, and you'll have plenty of time to get your mourning."

She had a beautiful figure, which the gown set off to perfection. "Now don't you get worked up, you silly, silly boy," she protested airily; "it's only my winter frock." And as she stooped to gather up the paper and box, I heard her mutter, "Black always *did* suit me!" and then she hastily disappeared with her belongings. One evening, when he had been unusually weak, and breathless, with all the power of his scanty strength, he implored me to telegraph for his brother Hans.

"I do want to see him so badly before I go," he urged, "and he'll look after my poor Lindy."

When I had despatched this summons, his one hope was to linger till Hans arrived. To please him, I got all the railway-guides, and made out the journey, and the time, for his peace, and satisfaction.

"Oh, I hope I won't go before he comes," he panted. "Oh, Mrs. Beaumont, do you think I'll live *two* days?"

"Yes, yes, dear—certainly," I said, as I bade him good-night, and was relieved at my post by young Mr. Tunnycliffe. "And I'll come up and see you very first thing in the morning."

But when I came in the morning, I found that the poor boy had passed away at daybreak. He could not wait. He looked quite beautiful as he lay there; so calm, and peaceful. Well! I never thought I should weep for any one again,—much less for the husband of that hateful Mrs.

Van Byl ;—but one never knows what one may do ! As I left the death-chamber, I met young Tunnycliffe in the corridor with an armful of lilies—his eyes were red.

"A happy release," he said ; "I was with him to the end."

"Where is she ?" I inquired sternly.

"Gone out walking with that beast Hirst ! I hope she will be punished—somehow. Oh, she is a real bad one. Do you know that yesterday, when that poor soul was gasping out his last breath, she was playing billiards ! She was real vexed because Arthur was not as well off as she expected—and so she made him pay."

"Well, he believed in her till the last, and I heard him implore her to go out of the room and take exercise. He was so afraid of seeing her break down."

"Just the *last* thing he had to fear," scoffed his friend. "Anyhow, his brother is coming to-morrow, and he will, I suppose, make all arrangements."

The following afternoon, Mrs. Van Byl, having received a wire, postponed a *tête-a-tête* drive, and retired to her own room, in order to assume both grief, and crape.

Immediately on his arrival, Hans Van Byl the millionaire, was presented to me. He wore deep mourning, and looked rich; a solid man of fifty, with a heavy coarse face, and a pair of keen little eyes. I must admit, that he appeared to feel the death of his brother acutely, and when I handed him his last letter, I saw his thick under-lip tremble, as he cast a glance over its contents.

"Will you take me to her?" he asked with some emotion, and I conducted him at once to Mrs. Van Byl's sitting-room. No French novels or playing-cards were here to be seen, but a beautiful, heart-broken creature, who received her wealthy kinsman, with a tragic outburst of grief!

Oh, what an actress was lost to the stage in the person of Lindy Van Byl! She looked supremely lovely in tears,—

and ner new black gown—as distractingly alluring, as she was superlatively heartless! I believe she complained bitterly, of the hardness, cruelty, and want of sympathy, of other women in the hotel, and threw herself without reserve upon her dear one's relative, for help and consolation. The remains of Arthur Van Byl were removed the next morning,—in order to be interred with his own people; they were accompanied by his mourning widow; who, closely veiled, and leaning on the arm of her newly-found protector, swept in her sable skirts through the entrance-hall, a most impressive and funereal spectacle! Little did the sadly deceived millionaire dream, of the whispering groups, the watching, mocking eyes, the scornful grins, and stares, of Lindy's late associates, as he supported that inconsolable lady to the carriage, which bore her away from their sight for ever.

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Within a surprisingly short interval Mrs. Van Byl became Mrs. Van Byl for a second time, as the wife of her late husband's half-brother. *He* believes her to be the most tender-hearted of her sex, and *I* believe, she is considered one of the smartest women in the State!

THE CLUE.

AN ANGLO-INDIAN SKETCH.

PART VIII.

In former days, the up-country station of Herda was renowned for sudden and terrible outbreaks of cholera—which devastated alike cantonment and bazaar—indeed, the dimensions of the cemetery were out of all proportion to its size—but more recently, its reputation is founded on great facilities for shooting black buck —and tiger; vast tempting forests outline the horizon, the local river teems with mahseer—and the fame of "the Herda Pig-sticking Club," has spread even to remote Bombay!

The little community was already beginning to talk "big," when it received a still further accession of importance, by

becoming the residence of one of the prettiest girls in the C. P.—pet name for the Central Provinces.

Miss Milly Maxwell, eldest daughter of the cantonment magistrate, had arrived from England six months previously—been duly jogged up from the station in the local vehicle—a bullock tonga,—and cordially welcomed by his stepmother,—who, judging by her attractive appearance, saw in Miss Milly a speedily parting guest! The day after her arrival—the *débutante*—arrayed in a smart gown, and her finest feathers—hat and boa—was formally presented at the Club! There, she created a favorable impression on the assembled matrons, who voted her face "not bad," and her gown "stylish." As for the men, several of these abandoned billiards, picquet, and whist, and thronged into the reading-room in order "to have a look at the new spin," and those who looked—were lost! Well, perhaps such a statement savors of exaggeration, but it

is a fact, that thirty per cent. of the bachelors in the station, were in love with Milly Maxwell.

"The Herda Beauty," as outsiders called her, was slim and of middle height; she had brown hair, soft dark eyes, and a complexion of wild roses—the little pitiful droop at the corner of her mouth was qualified by a delicious dimple.—Yes! it was well worth a man's while to make Miss Maxwell smile,—and her smiles were bestowed ungrudgingly on all—she had never yet smiled exclusively on *one* —there was safety in a multitude! And among the multitude of her adorers, three were especially prominent.

First in importance and dimensions, was Dr. Gosse, the civil surgeon, a widower, with bland manners, a bass voice, and many thousands of rupees. His suit was warmly favored by Mrs. Maxwell,—Milly's stepmother—and he dined regularly with the family on Sundays, and on all state occasions. Next came Captain

Hoggens, of the Belgaum Horse, a good-looking heavy young man, who never permitted any one to forget, that he had been in the Plaid Hussars, and had merely come out to the staff corps, because the pace was rather too severe !—public opinion backed *him*. Thirdly, there was Müller, of the Woods and Forests ! a fair bachelor of five-and-thirty, with a singularly flat head, and large ears—otherwise not ill-favored—he was handicapped by enforced absences from the cantonment, but when he did return, he laid splendid tiger skins—and not alone tiger skins—but tiger claws—and peacocks' tails—at his lady love's feet !

Müller's suit was vigorously supported, by Colonel Maxwell—a spare, elderly man, with the high hawk-like profile of a Pawnee brave, and a truly Indian appetite for sport—all the time, that he possibly could beg or steal, he devoted to shooting big game in the neighboring jungles.

These three suitors, were the most con-

spicuous of Miss Milly's admirers—though there were others, mere outsiders unworthy of official notification—and it was this trio, who received special encouragement from Milly's parents—but after all, what did this avail them, when the young lady herself stood inflexibly aloof? In an isolated up-country station, small affairs,—frankly, other people's affairs—assume important dimensions; there was not one among the mixed community at the Herda Club, who did not feel a kindly interest in pretty Miss Maxwell and a curiosity to know, to whom she would eventually throw the handkerchief? It was an acknowledged fact, that Milly must soon make her choice! She had three eager stepsisters at home, growing up like beanstalks—and Mrs. Maxwell, a forcible, managing little woman, was not likely to suffer her to linger another season in the family nest.

Meanwhile Milly was beautifully impartial; if she danced with Müller one night,

she rode with Hoggens in the morning, and, chaperoned by her mamma—took tea in the Doctor's luxurious and enticing bungalow.

Like most pretty girls in India, Miss Maxwell enjoyed "a real good time." She was often to be seen on the race-course, or out paper-chasing; she danced, played tennis, croquet, golf, had a host of admirers—some agreeable friends, and not a single enemy.

Young Heriot, a gunner, a silent, good-looking fellow, had fallen desperately in love with Milly—from the day she had first come into the reading-room, where, suddenly lifting his eyes from the *Field*, he had been dazzled by a radiant vision in a white gown, and a large black picture hat.

Bold as a lion among men—too bold sometimes—he was shy with women (he had no sisters), and did not venture to tell, or even hint, at his affection. He was only a subaltern in a field battery,

and, as such, a nobody in the eyes of Mrs. Maxwell, who knew his income, and prospects to a nicety. He was never invited to dinner, or to choice little croquet parties, or romantic moonlight picnics ! Oh—no—never !

Still, he contrived to secure a waltz with the beauty—sometimes three, for he danced irreproachably—but Müller danced like a performing bear.

He rode near her out paper-chasing,—when he was not a hare—and he exercised his strategy, in order to sit opposite to her in church, where he embodied the words " Eyes front."

Mr. Gray of the Salt Revenue Department, and Major Cramer of the Roosters, were sitting outside the club, sprawling in long chairs—the *Pioneer* much disheveled, lay between them—they had discussed in turn, the new frontier policy—the state of the rupee, and the delinquencies of a certain handicapper (Major Cramer was a racing man).

Presently their eyes and thoughts, settled down nearer home.

"I say," exclaimed Major Cramer, "will you look at Mrs. Maxwell and Muller? To my knowledge they have been conspiring on that seat, for an hour!—do you notice, how she wags her head, and raises her hands?—there is something up! I tell you she will give him a *lift*,—I don't mind laying you five to one."

"She will give any one a lift," assented Gray, "and of course we can understand her anxiety."

"Determination," corrected the other.

"Yes—to marry off her pretty stepdaughter, before her own ugly ducklings come out."

"Well, all I hope is, that she won't marry her to Muller—he reminds me of a tiger in the face, and though he is a wonderful shikari—he is a cruel beast to animals, and servants."

"He is not worse than Hoggens,—who has an infernal temper," protested Gray.

"No, but there is old Gosse—he is mild as buttermilk, and as rich as a plum-pudding."

"And has the figure of a water-butt—and is the same age as her father!"

"Upon my word, you are as hard to please as the girl herself."

"I am—I like her, and I could give one of her worshipers a good tip if I chose,—so good, that he'd walk over the course!"

Heriot—who had been standing above them on the veranda—suddenly jumped down—he had just come back from polo—and caught this bold announcement.

"Here you are, Major! I hope you'll be so good as to give your tip, to *me!*"

Major Cramer was so astonished, that he actually put his little bandy legs on *terra firma* and sat erect.

"To *you*"—looking him up and down—"you young ass!—why, you are not in the running!"

"There goes Ashton, and I'm off to whist," said Gray, rising. "Come along,

Heriot, you can have my place—and the tip."

"I'm aware that I'm not in the race," began Heriot, dropping into the vacant chair, "but I want to be."

"I didn't even know you were a starter. Do you mean to tell me you have the cheek to suppose, that one of the prettiest girls in India—with four hundred a year of her own,—would look at you?—why, you're only a subaltern!"

"That's true—but if I live, I may be a captain."

"You've kept yourself dark."

"What else can I do? I don't *shine* in women's society."

"Have you ever spoken to Miss Maxwell?"

"Of course I have—out paper-chasing, and down at the polo—and—and——"

"But never had a chance——!"

"No, nor half a chance."

"Well, Heriot, you are a good sort of boy."

"Boy!" indignantly, "I'm seven-and-twenty."

"I wish I was seven-and-twenty, scaled ten stone—and was in love——"

"I wish you were! but about this hint?"

"All right, you shall have it, my son, and much good may it do you. I suppose you know, that Miss Maxwell's only brother came out here, was lost in the jungle two years ago,—and has never been heard of since."

"Yes. I did hear something of that."

"It was a terrible blow to her—and also to old Maxwell; but *he* got over it, when he begged the Raipore tiger. This boy, and Milly, were brought up together by their grandmother. Maxwell married out here a year after his wife died, and saw next to nothing of his eldest children."

"No—I suppose not. But the tip—the valuable hint."

"Now"—spreading out an expostulatory hand—"hustle me, and I am dumb! Milly Maxwell did not come here—to get

'settled' as it's called—or even to see her father, and kind affectionate stepmother. I gather,—in fact, I *know*,—that she came east, in order to try and discover traces of her brother, and to ascertain his fate.—Whoever can bring her these tidings, will have a good start of all the others. You see?"

"I see—" assented Heriot. "I also see, that Muller will be the man,—no one else is in the running. It is *his* chance, worse luck! He is continually prowling about the forests and jungles, he is learned in all bird and beast lore, and as good at tracking as a Gond—and has all the forest executive at his beck and call. He speaks the Gond language like a native. Yes, I've no chance—I'm not in it, with Müller."

"I've heard that young Maxwell was out with a party in the Gonar jungle," resumed Major Cramer, "and that they lost sight of him at dusk, and never came across him again—no, not a sign of him—

I am told that his sister declares, she will never rest, till she finds his grave."

"Then I'm afraid I won't be much help to her," said Heriot gloomily—"I'm no shikari, and I can't go off out of the station whenever *I* please, like Müller."

"The battle is not always to the strong," replied the other, "and so far, Müller has made no use of his magnificent opportunities, perhaps it will be a case of the hare and the tortoise!—Take Michel the shikari—get ten days' leave, and go in and win. Remember you are not looking for black buck, but for a dead man's bones, and a girl's everlasting—well—gratitude!"

"Thank you, I'll act on your hint at once, and put in for leave—from to-morrow, mind you—mum—is the word!"

"All right," assented the other. "I wish you luck."

But unfortunately Major Cramer's good wishes proved to be futile—Heriot could not be spared—the battery was short of an officer—the general inspection was

coming off—and meanwhile Müller started for a lengthened tour in the Gonar district.

And still ill-luck, dogged the footsteps of Heriot; a bad fall from an unmanageable young remount—and this on the hard maidan—broke his collar-bone, and left arm. For several weeks he was confined to his bungalow, and at last, was ordered as a convalescent off to Leoni—an apology for a hill station one hundred miles north of Herda. The evening before his departure, he was suffered to drive down to polo—where this pale, shattered, and interesting gunner, attracted the notice of many—including Miss Maxwell herself.

"I hope you are better?" she said, riding up and accosting him with a pair of frank eyes, and a sympathetic smile. "It seems so odd—that you are not playing back."

"No—I've been *on* my back—on the hard high maidan—however I'm all right now if only the doctors would see it!"

"I am sure they are right! So you are off to Leoni I hear—I wish *I* were."

"I too wish it, most profoundly," he replied.

Miss Milly colored scarlet at this unexpected avowal.

"It is a delightful spot," she stammered, "an oasis above the plains—a plateau arising from a sea of forests."

"You had much better come. Let me know if I can arrange your bullock dâk."

"Oh, but I'm not really going—*I've* not been ordered up there."

"Still if you change your mind, remember you have only to command me."

"Command," she echoed. "Unfortunately, my commands are so difficult to carry out—in fact, they will *never* be carried out, as far as I can see."

"Why not—perhaps I may have the good fortune to fulfil them—if—you would only tell me, how to accomplish your wishes?"

"My one wish, is for some tidings of

Alec my brother,"—and her face grew white, and rigid. "Does it not seem impossible to believe, that although he disappeared within twenty miles of Herda, no trace of him has *ever* been found—no—not even in spite of large rewards to the natives, and long searchings. Of course Mr. Müller is doing his utmost."

"Yes, I can well understand it," he assented curtly.

"Oh—if I had only *one* little clue—one sign,—I would feel at rest. Every time Mr. Müller returns, my hopes are high—but they are always doomed to disappointment—however, he may succeed yet."

"And if he succeeds—you will reward him."

"I have not said so," and she looked confused.

"You have not said *no*," he replied, for her blushes irritated him into greater insistence.

"Surely a kind deed, is its own reward!" she faltered.

"Like virtue!" he suggested.

"Don't *you* believe in that?"

"No, no more than, that, Mr. Müller's praiseworthy searchings, are nobly disinterested!"

"May I inquire what it is to you?" she asked with a flash of spirit.

"*Everything*," was his bold reply.

Miss Maxwell reined back her pony, her eyes fell abashed beneath those of young Heriot. She had always considered him a nice, good-looking, gentlemanly boy—a capital dancer, and polo player, but *so* shy!

There was no shyness about him now; his eyes boldly proclaimed himself among her lovers! He had found his tongue too.

"I've heard of a price being put on a man's head—yes and on a woman's hand—I hate Müller—I should like to see his skull on a gate pier!"

"Mr. Heriot," she gasped, "what do you mean? You—you are beside yourself—raving——"

"Yes, I am. Forgive me, Miss Maxwell," he implored in a lower and more penitent tone. "It's this horrible fall—this crack on *my* skull I suppose—it has made *my* head a bit dotty. Well, good-by—please do forgive me, and wish me luck."

"Oh yes, I forgive you,—and I wish you luck," she repeated, then she turned her pony's head sharply round, and galloped off.

.

The journey to Leoni was deliberately performed by "Byle tonga"—along the great trunk road, which bisects India—once upon a time, a lively crowded thoroughfare. Now, how deserted! Every five miles, a fresh pair of bullocks were in waiting, or more often, bouncing obstreperously round their proprietor—and every ten miles, a neat whitewashed dâk bungalow glimmered behind bamboos—or sheshum trees. It was a leisurely progress, and the second night found Heriot,

his bearer, bedding and baggage, still *en route.* The sun was setting like a ball of fire, among flames of sulphur, when the cattle waddled up to the dâk bungalow at Dassi.

Whilst the khansamah and bearer were gravely conferring over the usual *menu*—Heriot, glad to stretch his legs, sauntered off on an exploring expedition to the right of the rest-house—along a well-beaten path, among the high crops of barley—white-blossomed peas, and yellow jowari.

There he discovered, a straggling cluster of huts—called village—one or two shops where cowrie shells were the current coinage, and baskets of cholum—wormy-looking native sweets—huka heads, and rows of beads—the stock in hand. Beyond the village, a sea of crops, and a few isolated dwellings ; one of these, was rather picturesque, the roof being covered with an overwhelmingly luxuriant melon. —As Heriot approached, a man appeared from the little enclosure, driving two lean

bullocks, and followed by a still leaner dog—a dachshund !

Heriot stared hard—no, his eyes had not deceived him ; miserably thin, ill-kept, and melancholy, he was indisputably a well-bred European animal !—a red dachshund with a long head—long body, and preposterously short legs. The instant he caught sight of Heriot, he precipitated himself on him, uttering shrill yelps, and screams of delight—he bustled round and round his feet, he leaped to lick his hands —he appeared to be almost delirious with joy.

" The Sahib—the protector of the poor —is at the dâk bungalow ?" said the old man with a profound salaam. He wore a ragged red turban, and a dirty blue cotton coat. " These bullocks are for the Presence—when he journey to-morrow."

" Oh—are they," exclaimed Heriot in a doubtful tone.

" Truly they are thin—but travel well —I am a very poor man."

"Yes—and the dog—is he yours?—he seems very poor and thin too."

"Yes, he is mine, Hazoor."

"A Belaity (English) dog. How did you get hold of him?"

"He was a gift, your Majesty—Chumajee, come here?" he added in a stern voice, as he fell on him, dragged him away from Heriot, and flung him roughly into the hut, and closed the door with a bang.

"Hullo, I say—gently with the dog,—he was doing no harm," remonstrated Heriot.

"He is a devil," retorted his owner fiercely—"an evil spirit."

"*Is* he? Well, remember to-morrow I start at six o'clock. Do not be late."

The bullock man salaamed with both hands, and then stood watching the tall young Englishman as he disappeared among the high crops.

Heriot was tired (the jolting of the tonga was trying to an invalid). He sat

after dinner alone, in the deep veranda, looking out on the moon-flooded scene—listening to a distant humming of tom-toms—and of course thinking of *her*. At last he passed into the land of dreams! From this agreeable country, he was rudely recalled by some soft moist substance touching his hand—which hung carelessly beside him. Was it a snake? He leaped to his feet, and looked about him anxiously No—it was only a dog. By Jove! the *dachshund!* Yes; there he was, appealing to Heriot with a pair of piteous and imploring eyes.

"Poor beggar," he said aloud, stooping to stroke him, "he is just skin and bone. Well for once, he shall have a square meal"—and raising his voice he aroused the sleeping bearer, and ordered—what?—"a dinner—for a dog."

These Feringhees were undoubtedly mad! However, a respectable plateful was ultimately produced, but strange to relate, the dachshund did not fall upon it

voraciously, as Heriot had anticipated,—no, though half famished, it was Heriot's favor—Heriot's society—he sought.

He would devour a morsel—and then turn, and come and gaze at Heriot—fawn on him, and cry, and whimper. He actually preferred Heriot to *food*—though undoubtedly starving.

All the same the visitor dog, in spite of his dumb entreaties, was sternly driven forth, when the bungalow was closed—yet there in the morning, he was discovered, still in the veranda—he had never stirred all night; and his topaz eyes looked pathetically at Heriot, as if saying, "How could you cast me out? I will never, never leave you!"

But alas! at six o'clock,—after his simple chotah hazree—the gunner officer left *him*—yes, notwithstanding his frenzied attempts, to take the tonga by storm, and scramble in, anyhow. His poor little short legs, were of no assistance to him, and his master, the owner of the bullocks,

struck him heavily and dragged him away, struggling and howling—at the end of a ragged cotton turban.

Heriot looked back, ere the long, long, road took a turn;—there—released or escaped—was the dachshund—a small item on the broad white track—he was gazing intently after the departing traveler, and his attitude, expressed despair!

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A few days in the cool altitude of Leoni, worked a charm upon Heriot. Within a week he felt equal to tennis or billiards. It was a small sociable community—he was made much of as a stranger, and the oasis, was as a land flowing with milk and honey—with golden grain—glorious roses—and—Arab hospitality.

But although Heriot knew that each day, was improving his health, and dispersing lassitude and fever—his heart yearned to return to Herda—and Milly Maxwell. Perhaps ere this, Müller had

brought her news from the jungle?—and as he turned this thought over in his brain, he ground his heel into the unoffending gravel.

Women will do so much for sentiment, for gratitude. Imagine Milly — lovely Milly, with her long white throat—her starlike eyes, her—sympathetic disposition —the wife of that common fellow, with a face like a huge cat, and the disposition of a Calmuc!

The good people at Leoni, made a great deal of the interesting convalescent, —women especially.—He was so quiet—and unassuming,—yet *he* was the young Heriot, who had done such gallant things with a mountain battery in a recent frontier war!

At last his leave was up—Heriot was off again on his hundred mile journey—and as he sped down the ghâut overlooking a regular sea of forests, his thoughts went ahead of him, to the dachshund!

He was fond of dogs—his conscience

had given him several nasty twinges respecting this miserable expatriated animal, whose anxious overtures, he had so coldly repulsed. How came he into the jungle ?—he was as much out of place in a native hut, as a jackal in an English armchair. He had some history—and this, the old bullock man would not divulge.

Well, he would have another shot, and do his best to discover the dachshund's story ! On the evening of the first day, he arrived at the dâk bungalow—and early next morning, the same old man appeared, with the same bullocks, and the same dog.

The latter looked cowed, emaciated, humble, and wretchedly unhappy, and sorry for himself.

" Hullo," said Heriot. " Come here, old boy, and tell me all about your trouble."

The creature rushed forward in reply to its native tongue.

" I like this dog of yours, Byle-wallah," continued Heriot, " will you sell him ? "

"No, no—I never sell, though I very poor man."

"Why not? you can't be fond of him—or you'd feed him."

"I feed him sumptuously. Chupatties and milk and ghee—but he never eat scarcely—that not my fault."

"He is fretting for some one, I suppose?"

"How I can tell?" replied the bullock man, with scorn, "he only dog."

"Well, I wish you'd sell him—why won't you?"

"Because—if I sell him—I sell my fortune—he bring *me* good luck."

"He doesn't look particularly lucky himself, poor brute! I say, I'll give you twenty rupees for him, and that you may call good luck."

The man stared—his old eyes sparkled—he sighed—he hesitated—the dog fawned upon Heriot, and whined—as if he knew that his fate was at stake.

At last, the bullock man slowly shook his head.

"Come then, thirty rupees?"

Once more he heaved a profound sigh, looked at the sky—the land—the dog—at Heriot, and again shook his head, and sighed heavily.

"Well then, fifty!" Any of his friends who had been present, would have declared unhesitatingly, that Heriot was a fool.

"No, Sahib—no, Lord of the World—tempt me not," pleaded the dog's master—but his voice was weak, and faltering.

"Come," cried Heriot, "you don't like the dog—he does not care for you—you beat him, and you starve him—you have some secret connected with him, and that I'll discover, as sure as you are alive."

"Oh, Sahib—Cherisher of the Poor—what secret could *I* have?—I am but a poor slave, and he—he was—only——"

"Only what?" demanded Heriot sharply.

"The dog of some man, I never knew.—I swear it on my son's head. Sahib—

now—I tell you the last word—I take one hundred rupees."

"Great Scott! One hundred rupees?"

"Yes—and you take the dog, Sahib."

"If any one saw me, they would swear I was mad!" muttered the Sahib, "but if I left the poor little brute here—the wear and tear of remorse, would be worse than one hundred rupees. He has taken an unaccountable fancy to me, and maybe he will bring *me* luck—goodness knows, I want it."

The hundred rupees were duly forthcoming—between the combined resources of Heriot, and his bearer and the latter, naturally, thought his master was crazy, to give one hundred rupees—the price of a pair of good bullocks,—for a common ugly yellow dog—but then, who could fathom the madness of an English officer?

At last, the bargain was arranged. Chumachjee, as he was called, was lifted into the tonga—and sat upon the front seat beside Heriot, like one well accus-

tomed to such honor. Oh yes, he had been there before ! He gave vent to his ecstatic feelings, by addressing yelps, and barks of triumph to all dogs and people, they encountered on the road.

It was a flat but beautiful country—peacocks and monkeys varied the scene, and flocks of green parrots flashed across the sky. On one side lay a dense forest and jungle, on the other, plains of deep yellow corn, ready for the reaping. Thus the dog and his new owner, traveled together mile after mile at the slow jogging pace peculiar to horned cattle ; but everything has an end, even a bullock dâk. First of all, the shining river came in sight—then the church tower, and as they approached nearer the cantonment, the dog's feelings became more and more uncontrollable. His emotions made him restless—he addressed loud familiar barks to passing soldiers, and even to ladies, and gentlemen. He, an ill-fed dachshund—with gaunt ribs—his hair singed off one side,

and a string of ridiculous blue beads round his neck.

And now that Heriot came to think of it, when he had first seen the animal in the sunset, he wore a *leather collar.* What had become of it? The leather collar probably had his master's name on it, and that old Hunks—the bullock man, —had kept it. As he reflected on this, he pulled off the string of beads and dashed it into the road—even a dog, had a right to some respect.

The usual sociable community were gathered in, and about, the club when Heriot reappeared among them. Some were playing badminton, and with feverish energy some the more placid croquet—but a circle of men were sitting out, in long chairs, and it was towards these, that the gunner bent his steps.

"Well, Heriot!" cried Major Cramer, "so you are back—and looking as fit as a fiddler."

"Yes, I'm all right, thanks."

"What's the news in Leoni?"

"None. Any here?" glancing round the circle, and his eyes rested apprehensively on Muller.

"Not a breath—except that Tom Potter's charger has broken his knees. Hullo! where did you raise the dog?"

"I picked him up in the jungle near Dessi."

"I say, what a study in anatomy!" remarked one.

"Not much of a find!" added another —"he looks like the ghost of a dachshund."

"Why," exclaimed Müller, sitting erect in his chair. "I know the brute! You got him about fifty miles out—I've seen him several times—he haunts the road, or lurks in the Dassi dâk bungalow—and tries hard to hook on to Europeans."

"Yes."

"And he has found out a soft one at last, ha! ha! Fancy being seen with such an object! He tried it on with me,

but I gave him such a rousing kick, that I believe I broke his ribs—at any rate, he never bothered me a second time."

"No," returned Heriot quickly. "Dogs and children give *you* a wide berth."

Whilst this conversation was going forward, the badminton party had broken up, and were straggling by the circle of smokers.

Several stopped and exchanged cheery greetings with Heriot, and among these was Miss Maxwell.

"So—you liked Leoni—and it was all I reported?"

"Yes, but a little sleepy—what else could you expect of a place one hundred miles from everywhere—not even a soda-water machine——"

"*Where*," she interrupted suddenly, pointing—"did you get that dog?" and she stared at the dachshund, with a face white as her gown.

"Oh, I bought him from a bullock man in the jungle," he answered carelessly.

"He insisted on coming with me, and I fancied him. It was a sort of mutual admiration—love at first sight."

"*Dan*," she called, half under her breath. The creature instantly pricked up his ears, and looked about him. "Dan, come here," she added in a choked voice. He went timidly towards her and she snatched him up in her arms—then turning her back on the circle, walked away—covering him with kisses—yes, kisses!

"Well, I never saw a more flagrant case of dog-stealing!" exclaimed a looker-on, with a laugh—but Heriot had already followed the thief.

The dog struggled violently to be released, then as Miss Maxwell set him down, she looked at Heriot, her eyes swimming in tears—and said with a faint sob—

"I need not apologize. He was my brother's dog."

Heriot's heart leapt. Perhaps the

dachshund was going to bring him luck, too!

"Tell me how you found him—tell me everything," she continued, now endeavoring to speak with composure.

When Miss Maxwell walked away from the neighborhood of the club—several pairs of eyes followed her, as she and the young gunner paced the lawn to and fro, accompanied by a gaunt dachshund—they were talking earnestly—seriously—continuously. "*Heriot* is the man," announced Major Cramer under his breath, and he must be credited with "an intelligent anticipation of events." For that very same evening, Mr. Heriot dined at the cantonment magistrate's for the first time.

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A week later, Heriot—who had obtained three days' leave—was once more at Dassi bungalow—but on this occasion he was accompanied by Colonel and Miss Maxwell, and a police officer.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, when they made their way to the little melon-covered hut among the crops—the bullock man was out, and the house when entered, merely displayed the usual mud floor—charpoy, cooking pots—and one hideous old hag. The owner was presently descried returning home slowly, driving his gaunt bullocks before him. When he became aware of the group outside his abode, he paused suspiciously.

"We have come out from Herda," explained Heriot, "to inquire about that dog."

"Ah—that Shaitan! I wish every day I had never sold him—but—what is the pleasure of the Presence?" and he salaamed, and glanced uneasily from one to another of his visitors.

"We only want you to tell us, how you found the dog!" replied Heriot in his suavest tone. "Come—that's not much?"

"The story is simple—Protector of the Poor—he was astray, and starving, in the

jungle—I found him two years ago, and I brought him home. Of a truth that is all" —opening wide his hands.

"Budmash!—there is more behind," urged Colonel Maxwell sharply. "Where is the leather collar?"

"Kuda Jantha!" (God knows) he answered with an exaggerated shrug.

"Yes, a collar with a sahib's name. Tell the truth,—you will find it your best policy."

"I very poor man, Gureeb Purwar, what I tell?"—and his face assumed an absolutely wooden expression.

"Oh, all right," rejoined Colonel Maxwell angrily, "do as you please, but I warn you, that the dog belonged to my son. He was lost in this jungle, two years ago —the dog I believe never left him, whilst he *lived.* Are you prepared to be tried for murder?"

"Oh—I implore you to tell us all you know," pleaded Milly. "You shall be well paid. He was my brother, my only brother."

"Then verily I will tell the Miss Sahib —all—but there must be—no—police—no punishment—no jail, because, I am a poor man—but by my son's head, my hands are clean from blood."

"Go on," said Colonel Maxwell, in a hoarse voice. "Milly," turning to the girl, "sit down on that log."

The villager leant upon his staff—the bullocks strayed off—and, looking keenly round the little group, he began abruptly—

"It is two years this harvest, when I had a crop of jowari—on a piece of land three miles away—near the forest. I used to go there to scare deer and pig, and I noticed when coming home at sundown, the barking, barking of a dog.—That evening I was weary, and I thought but little of it. Next day the same barking sound —from same place—but fainter and weaker. On the third day, my son,—who is young and foolish,—went to see what it portended? It was in the forest—some way

off.—He came running swiftly, and much disturbed—calling for me to join him. Protector of Slaves, I will tell the truth. I found the body of a dead Sahib—dead some days—and the red dog beside him almost dead—he could no longer bark, or even stand."

"Yes, yes, go on quickly," said Colonel Maxwell, in a broken voice.

"The Sahib had been wounded by a wild buffalo—they are mad—furious beasts—he had escaped across a nullah, and then fallen.—His coat was covered with blood—he had been badly gored—he must have died soon——" he paused and fastened his fiery eyes on the police officer.

"We were sorely frightened, my son and I—our hearts were as water, knowing well the wickedness of some, and how easily they put suspicion on innocent folk. We therefore conferred together, and resolved to bury the body—and to hold our peace. We therefore brought our mattocks, and made a grave that night—it was

moonlight—and laid the Sahib as he was —but first I took away—thirty rupees, a watch, a rifle—verily I keep nothing from the Sahibs—also a pair of boots and leggings—and one small book."

"And what have you done with these?"

"The rifle and book I possess—the rupees, I spent on two bullocks, the watch I sold to the village malgozar, telling him I had found it on the high road."

"Bring out this rifle, and the book," commanded the magistrate.

They were craftily secreted in the wall —under the thatch—and when the bullock man reappeared, he produced a good but rusty C. F. rifle—and a little memorandum book—the leaves were glued together with blood, but on the last of these —after an entry of "Four black buck—four peacocks and one wild pig"—was painfully scrawled some lines (many words were blurred and undecipherable),—"I am dying—gored by a buffalo—if found—my love Milly—Dan—will——"

"Oh, what a death!" she exclaimed, with streaming eyes, "and all alone."

"He had the dog," responded her father, searching for some small comfort. "He had Dan."

"True, Protector of the Poor," added the bullock man. "The dog never left him, and after he was buried, for many many days he lay upon the spot. *He* never forgets—he is not a dog—no, he is an evil spirit, greatly I feared him, yet I dared not kill him—it seemed to me, that he lay in wait on the high road, to tell the news to other Sahibs, his master's friends—but none ever hearkened—not one—save the tall youth with the broken arm!—Aye truly I desired to slay the dog—but dared not;—not to have, is one trouble—but to possess, is many troubles."

The remains of Alec Maxwell were exhumed and solemnly interred in the great crowded cemetery—at Henda, and not long after that ceremony—and considerably before the date at which the second Miss

Maxwell was due in Bombay—there was a smart wedding from the cantonment magistrate's. Four gray battery horses were harnessed to the only laudau in the station—for it was a cantonment of "cow carts"; these—ridden by the bridegroom's brother officers, and finding the vehicle a mere plaything, compared to a gun—ran away with the happy pair, for the first two miles. Captain Heriot and his bride were accompanied by a complacent dog—who occupied the front seat—and wore a full-sized white satin favor—it is superfluous to add, that his name was "Dan."

"INCOGNITO."

PART IX.

THE dusty, leisurely, down mail, stood empty in Jubbulpore Station, whilst fitful lamps within the carriages, illuminated a confused collection of pillows, books, tiffin baskets, disheveled newspapers, cheap fans, etc. But in spite of appearances the train was not deserted, merely temporarily abandoned by its passengers,—who were snatching a hasty dinner, in the adjoining refreshment-room.

A long narrow table, was closely encompassed with people, for it was the month of March, when the Anglo-Indian is homeward bound, and steamers are crammed with civilians, soldiers, sportsmen, missionaries, globe-trotters—and of women and children, a great host. At the end of the table nearest to the door,

three men sat wedged together, two were unmistakably soldiers, the other, was possibly a tourist, a small spare clean-shaven individual, aged about thirty, with a pair of cool blue eyes, and a well-cut, and singularly firm mouth. He was dressed in a neat gray flannel suit, and was despatching his meal in business-like silence. The other two, were evidently friends who had recently met,—and had much to say to one another.

"What a squash there is here!" said one, "almost every one I know is going home this year."

"That's so," agreed his companion, "but I don't spot any of my acquaintance for a wonder," then as he leant forward, and scanned the double row of faces, "Yes, by Jove, there is Mother Bonny, and a whole tribe of women."

"Who is she?"

"Colonel's wife at Lukimpore, awful good sort, one of her daughters is married to Dickson in the 10th Bengal Cavalry—

you know Dicky? The other is engaged to young P. Green of the Police; they are sitting one each side of her, and P. Green next to his lady-love."

"Well, they are no beauties, either of them," remarked his friend, "who is the dark girl?—she is handsome."

"That's Miss Wayne—haven't you heard of Miss Wayne, orphan, and heiress, and old Bonny's niece?"

"No, we have something else to hear of on the frontier, than orphan heiresses."

"She has twelve hundred a year of her own."

"And is consequently engaged to be married."

"No, and that's the rum thing, there are the two Bonny girls off, and Miss Wayne with all her money, and looks, is left! I tell you, she don't like it a little bit."

"What does it mean?" inquired the other with his mouth full.

"It means, that the English subaltern

is not a mercenary bird, and won't marry a woman for her money *alone.*"

"Twelve hundred a year would keep him nicely in polo ponies."

"Yes, and in a hell upon earth—she's got a beastly temper, an awful tongue, and can only talk on one topic—and she talks a lot."

"The topic?"

"Is Miss Wayne. Hullo, here they come," rising.

"Oh, Captain Crofton," exclaimed a stout handsome woman, with a double chin, and a merry eye, "just fancy, meeting you here—*en route* home too, and in the *Salamander* I hope?"

"And I see you are quite a family party," exchanging greetings with the three other ladies.

"Yes, all my little flock—I've not left *one* behind," said the good lady. "I must hurry on, and get hold of our ayah, —we shall meet again in Bombay," and Mrs. Bonny passed out, followed by her two daughters, small, pale young women

with reddish hair, and white teeth; but Miss Wayne still lingered for a moment, surveying the company, with an air of hard self-confidence.

"So you are coming home in the *Salamander*," she said, suddenly addressing Captain Crofton, in a querulous voice, "however we shall see nothing of you from Bombay to London—that is very certain."

"Why? Are you such bad sailors?" he inquired, lifting his brows.

"No, but we are all going second-class, it's *too* abominable! but Aunt Bonny insists, because we are such a large party; at least she has three passengers to pay for—I must say it's rather hard, that *I* have to go second, and I would certainly go first, only it would look so odd—second class, is really only intended for second-class people."

"I'm going second, Miss Wayne."

"Oh, are you?" brightening up. "Then we shall know someone."

"Yes, but lots of people go that way now—you get through with the mails—you make your own party—it's comfort-table and——"

"But *men* can do anything," she interrupted. "I do think it's too bad, that when I can so well afford to travel first class, I am compelled to fall in with Aunt Bonny's hateful economies. She is saving for Mary's trousseau—just wait, and you will see how disagreeable I shall make myself!" and with a casual nod, she walked away.

"Not much fear about *that*, I should say," remarked Mr. Lomax, "but she's an uncommonly good-looking girl, and would be very handsome, if those two dark eyes of hers, were not set so close together."

"Oh, she's all right as far as looks go, and I know one or two fellows who have had a narrow squeak—Bolter of the Body-guard was engaged to her for a whole week, but they had a furious row about

some other girl, and it was broken off. I say, there's the bell—come on."

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The *Salamander* left Bombay Harbor with upwards of four hundred passengers, and these included Mrs. Bonny and her family, Captain Crofton, Mr. Lomax, and the clean-shaven individual, who had sat near them at Jubbulpore Station; and here he was, again at their table, in the second class saloon of the P. and O. His name was entered as Mr. J. C. Rivers, last address the Charleville Hotel, Mussouri. He appeared to be a harmless, faultlessly-dressed little man, who at first said nothing, and listened much, went out of his way to carry chairs, and books, for Mrs. Bonny and her flock, and was profusely liberal with a brand of first-class cigars, and Russian cigarettes.

After a meal or two, he made an audacious attempt to draw Miss Wayne—who happened to be his neighbor—into conversation, but was ferociously snubbed into

silence. The gracious lady bestowed all her attention, and every one of her smiles, on thankless Mr. Lomax,—who sat on her left hand,—but treated Mr. Rivers with paralyzing hauteur, barely acknowledging his humble "Good-morning," and accepting his unfailing supply of salt, sugar, and butter, his alacrity in picking up her handkerchief,—with merely a scornful stare!

Suddenly, and without the slightest apparent reason,—beyond a woman's caprice,—Miss Wayne condescended to notice her hitherto despised neighbor; and one day of her own accord, addressed him affably at breakfast; at lunch, she remarked, that she remembered seeing him at Jubbulpore; and at dinner, turned her shoulder coldly on Mr. Lomax, and transferred her conversation entirely to her new acquaintance.

It was evident that Miss Wayne was offering an *amende honorable*—making up for former slights; and beamed on the

little man, whilst she chattered incessantly of herself. She looked unusually handsome, her color was brilliant, her eyes sparkled, her gestures were animated, and her cousins noticed, that she was actually wearing her string of pearls, and best diamond brooch. What did it all mean? —her sudden civility to the quiet little tourist? They rose simultaneously from the table, and went on deck together, where they paced up and down in the starlight for at least an hour; at the end of that time, Mr. Rivers was thoroughly *au courant* with Miss Wayne's money matters, her connections, her prejudices, and her plans for the future!

The Bonny girls, though well accustomed to Myra's violent fancies, violent dislikes—her friendships were sudden, and their ends untimely—were for once completely at fault; and they asked one another, what did she see in the cool, self-possessed little passenger who was half a head shorter than herself? She

sat about with him in dark corners, she flattered him openly, and though of a saving turn (despite her fortune) had taken all her best frocks and hats into daily wear! Surely it was not possible, that Myra contemplated marrying this insignificant-looking globe-trotter! They dared not venture to put the question to their hot-tempered cousin, well knowing the sharp answer which would be their reply.

But the plain truth was this. A vulgar gossiping woman, with whom Miss Wayne had struck up a friendship, in "talking over" their fellow-passengers, one evening, said—

"By the way, you know the little man at your table? He is not one of your party, is he?"

"Oh, dear no," responded Miss Wayne in her loftiest manner, "I don't know anything about him—except that he is rather pushing!"

"Well, but *I* know something about

him," continued the lady, lowering her voice, mysteriously, " and I will tell you what it is—if you will promise not to let it go any further."

" Oh, yes, I'll promise," agreed the other with a languid air, " he is not very interesting—anyway."

" Is he not?" rejoined Mrs. Gibbings, now on her mettle. " He is a *lord*—in disguise."

" A lord ! " repeated Myra in a loud startled voice, suddenly sitting erect, " What do you mean ? "

" Hu-s-s-h " said her companion, " I don't want all the world to hear, but it is true. My brother is in his cabin, and he says he has the most splendid dressing-bag, everything mounted in beaten silver, and a beautiful suit case, that must have cost a fortune—there is an earl's coronet on his clothes-brush, and his dressing-gown is as gorgeous as a coronation robe! "

" Nonsense—that quiet little man, who waits on me, almost like a Kitmatgar, and picks up my handkerchief."

"Yes, that little quiet man, and Tom says he has quantities of tiger skins, and crocodile skins on board, and horns of every size and shape, and is most particular, and fussy about them. He has been shooting in Travancore, and Central India, and Nepaul."

"You don't mean to say that *he* has shot tigers!"

"Oh yes—twenty at least—and Tom says he seems to know everyone—I mean everyone who *is* anybody. He is so quiet and unassuming, that's the way with these quiet people, but he has stayed at Chatsworth and Sandringham, and all sorts of places, and appears as intimate with the smart set, as if they were his own brothers and sisters!"

"And why is he all alone?"

"Simply because his party have gone on to Thibet, and he thought it too much of a fag, he does not care for horseflesh, or buttered tea, and dirt."

"But how strange, that he should

travel second-class," argued Myra, with energy.

"Not at all—many of these rich people are eccentric, and like to go down a step, and mix with all sorts of conditions of men—and women. Do you know him at all?"

"Very, very slightly," confessed Myra, and a spasm of remorse overwhelmed her, when she looked back on the last four days—those lost four days—what hours of wasted opportunity! Only eight days more (for of course he would get off the ship at Brindisi)—but much may be accomplished in eight days!

Well, she must begin to talk to him gradually, cautiously, and by gentle degrees. She would break the ice at their next meal—breakfast. As she thus mused, Mrs. Gibbings suddenly interrupted her meditations.

"I don't intend to tell anyone else for it is evident that Lord—Somebody—wishes to travel incognito. Tom says, he hides

away all the coronets, and covers up the crests, and when he offers him a cigar, he keeps the case in his own hand,—but he spotted the crown all the same! I expect, he would be furious, if he knew I had been talking—you won't tell your aunt, and cousins, will you!"

"No, indeed," rejoined Miss Wayne, with convincing emphasis. "You may rely on me."

"And you will keep all I have told you to yourself—on no account let Mr. Rivers suspect, that you are in possession of his secret?"

To this request, Miss Wayne gave an equally cordial assent, and presently she rose from her seat, said good-night, and descended to her cabin,—hugging her precious piece of news. Once alone, she spent a considerable time in hunting up her most becoming morning gown, and in crimping her hair with unusual elaboration.

* * * * *

By the time the *Salamander* entered the Canal, the pair were so conspicuous that a notable matron of Mrs. Bonny's acquaintance dropped a word of caution, and remonstrance.

"You know, what these board ship love affairs *are*, my dear Polly, and the girl is getting talked of, even in the first-class saloon! If I were you, I'd give her a hint. Who is the man? for no one seems to have met him?"

"I'm sure I have no idea, but he is quiet and civil and unassuming, and seems accustomed to good society," replied Myra's chaperone. "I will certainly take your advice, and speak to Myra, though I must tell you frankly, that I will do it with my heart in my mouth."

"Bah! you are afraid of her, and she knows it. I would soon control her, if she were my niece," boasted her friend.

"Ah, it is easy to say so, dear, but what can you do with a girl who won't open her lips for weeks?"

"I should feel inclined to send for a locksmith."

"Yes, it's very easy to laugh, but Myra is not an everyday girl to manage."

With a quaking heart, Mrs. Bonny sent a messenger for Miss Wayne, and proceeded to interview her in her own cabin.

"Now, Aunt Mary, what is it?" she asked, in a sharp key, evidently impatient of the summons.

"It's only just to give you a hint, dear, as I would to one of my own girls,—a little word about Mr. Rivers."

"What about Mr. Rivers?" asked the girl in a challenging tone.

"You see we know nothing of him, nor who he is. He may be married, for all you know, and he is making you conspicuous by his attentions," replied Mrs. Bonny. "I must confess, that he is wonderfully alert and quick in getting me a seat or a shawl, and extremely handy and polite, but—we really know nothing about him," she concluded rather lamely.

" He is very well bred, at any rate—any one can see that. You don't suppose, that I would associate with anyone, who was not a gentleman ?"

" No, my dear, I will not dispute about that, but what *is* he ?"

" He is not a mere ordinary tourist, I can assure you," responded Myra, with immense dignity, " but accustomed to mix with the highest class of society, surely that is enough? You imagine that every one should be in the Army, like that odious swaggering Captain Crofton—Mr. Rivers is his own master, and can come, and go, when and where he likes, not at every one's beck and call, as if he were in the Service ! "

" Well, dear, I'm only putting you on your guard ; supposing this Mr. Rivers turned out to be *quite* different to what you assume ?"

Myra's eyes flashed triumphantly, and Mrs. Bonny resumed——

" There is something odd about him—

something I cannot fathom. He never alludes to his people, or his home. I cannot make him out. He is not like anyone, *I* have ever met before."

"I think that is your loss," was the pert rejoinder of Mr. Rivers' champion; "if I am satisfied with him, I suppose that is the main thing?"

"But, my dear child, you really must not give him any encouragement, till we get home and make proper inquiries," protested her chaperone, tearfully. "No one on board has ever met him, or even heard of him, and your uncle holds me responsible for you; if it were one of my own girls, I could not be more anxious. How I wish you were happily settled, like Alice and Mary."

It was a most unfortunate aspiration. Miss Wayne, who had been loudly tapping her foot as she sat on the edge of a berth, now sprang up with a scarlet face.

"Thank you, but I really don't aspire to a subaltern in the Staff Corps, or a boy

in the Police ; if I could not do better than Alice, and Mary, I'd a million times rather be an old maid ! " and she opened the cabin door, and banged it behind her, with a slam that shook the very fixtures.

After this interview, it was noticeable, that Mr. Rivers' reserve gradually yielded —he became more communicative, and introduced the pronoun " I," as if he felt compelled to do so, almost in spite of his own natural reticence, and Mrs. Bonny,— who was now extremely critical of Mr. Rivers' demeanor and discourse,—felt abashed and uncomfortable, as the little man quietly dropped remarks respecting great houses, and great people, far beyond her ken ; and spoke with an air of calm familiarity that impressed his listeners. *He* knew, why the Duke of Burleigh had left the celebrated Burleigh pearls out of the family ; why Lady Hotspur and Lady Una Millefois did not speak,—since they had been at the same hotel in Cairo ; who made the Duchess of Leicester's dresses,

and what they cost—and what the duke paid his head keepers—and pocketed out of the game.

"Oh yes," in answer to a curt inquiry, "he had been to Fortingall Castle several times, and knew every foot of the deer forest. But he did not care for Scotland, the climate was too raw, the moors too stiff—he generally spent the winters on the Riviera: did Mrs. Bonny know Lord Lochfoyle? No, well he saw more of him than any one;—he was a rare good fellow—and his eldest daughter was growing up, and promised to be a beauty,—and a nice unaffected girl."

It was evident, that this quiet little man, with the irreproachable clothes, and calm blue eyes,—whose tranquillity it was impossible to disturb,—was accustomed to pass his time in more stately society, than was to be found, in the second-class saloon of the *Salamander!* And these were the days of Myra's triumph. She figuratively swelled with importance, she

trampled cruelly on her cousins,—for there was no mistaking Mr. Rivers' "intentions" ;—elevation, and elation, were both injurious to a young lady of Miss Wayne's disposition, she already saw a coronet shining on her brow, and scarcely deigned to answer when addressed. Mr. Rivers ("Johnny," as she called him when they were alone) had imparted to her, that it was the glimpse of her sweet face at Jubbulpore Junction, that had decided his fate. He had pursued her to Bombay, and on board the steamer, bribed the steward for a place beside her, and was fully prepared to follow her to the world's end !

.

"I say, your friend Miss Wayne is going the pace with that little clean-shaven chap," remarked Mr. Lomax to Captain Crofton, as they paced the deck after dinner ; "they are actually sitting in one of the boats now ; and last night I met them wandering about at twelve o'clock."

"I daresay Miss Wayne is put on her mettle, by the ever-haunting presence of an engaged cousin."

"Yes, any one would suppose that Miss Wayne was engaged; the affair has gone rather far even for a board ship flirtation. She sends him notes—the steward brought *me* one by mistake. Rivers is a quiet little chap, clever, absolutely self-controlled, and, well—I should say strong-willed. He does not seem to have any particular hobby,—bar Miss Wayne,—and I can't quite classify him—what do you say?"

"That still *rivers* run deep."

"Miss Wayne intends to marry him."

"Yes, but mind you, not against his will! He is not a bad sort of fellow, and his taste in tobacco is A1. He plays a capital game of poker, and I think he has some other game on—some sort of card up his sleeve."

"Yes, the Queen of Clubs, 'The Dark Ladye,' the 'returned' heiress."

.

The *Salamander* landed the mails, and half of her passengers at Brindisi, and then promptly resumed her trip to London. Mrs. Bonny and all her party were going round, but when the passengers assembled at dinner, there were two empty seats at her table, Mr. Rivers and Miss Wayne had left the ship at Brindisi,—without the formality of bidding any one good-by. An elaborately civil steward—with a ten-pound cheque in his waistcoat pocket—brought Mrs. Bonny a note from her charge, which said—

"DEAR AUNT POLLY,—Mr. Rivers and I are going to steal a march on every one, and be married quietly without any fuss. I have taken a small portmanteau and my hand-bag, the rest of the luggage will come on with you. When next you see me, I shall be Johnny's wife, and in a position that will *surprise* all my friends.

"Till we meet, your affectionate niece,

"MYRA."

The elopement afforded a fruitful topic of conversation all the way round to the Thames, even in the uncertain-tempered Bay it still held out gallantly. No sooner was the *Salamander* docked, than Mrs. Bonny was handed a telegram, which she tore open, and read—

"Hotel Victoria. Come to me without an hour's delay. Most urgent. Myra."

In a condition of painful anxiety and perturbation, Mrs. Bonny—having disposed of her luggage and daughters, hastened to respond to the summons. She arrived at her destination, and was immediately conducted to a certain private sitting-room, where she discovered Mrs. Rivers—alone, disheveled, and in tears.

"Oh, Aunt Polly," she began, throwing up her arms as she spoke, "such an awful thing has happened—about—my husband!"

"Not—not—dead!" faltered Mrs. Bonny.

"Oh no," sobbed the bride, "but I wish he was——"

"My dear!" expostulated her aunt, aghast at such a statement.

"Yes—what do you think—he is, or was,—Lord Lochfoyle's—*valet!*—And I've married him!" Here the wretched dupe, flung herself downwards on the sofa, and shook with hysterical sobs.

"Sit up directly, Myra," said Mrs. Bonny, "and talk sensibly—tell me what you have been doing?"

"It was all Mrs. Gibbings' fault. She told me that he had coronets on everything," gasped Myra, raising her tear-stained face, "her brother was in the same cabin, and was sure he was a nobleman, traveling as Mr. Rivers—and—and—well, you know how friendly we became—and as he never, never would talk about himself—or his past, or his people,—or name any names, I was quite certain he was somebody—and I saw a crown on his cigarette case, and on an envelope, in a

book he lent me ; and then he swore he had fallen in love with me at Jubbulpore Station, and followed me to England—and I believed it *all !*"

"Yes, go on," urged Mrs. Bonny, "I'm wondering how I am to tell your uncle—he will blame me !"

"Oh, Aunt Polly, can't I get a divorce ?"

"Divorce ?—No ! You have taken the man for better or worse—when did you discover the truth ?"

"Only last night ; though I had thought some things rather strange ; and he never said a word about his title—but I supposed he was keeping that back as a surprise. However late last evening when we were crossing the hall on our way to dinner, a smart servant in livery, stopped him, with a hail-fellow-well-met air, and said, 'Hullo, Johnny ! when did you get back ? What have you done with his lordship ?' and he stared so rudely at *me*, that I walked on, thinking that the creature was intoxicated ! And when he

—I can't call him Johnny—followed me—and I questioned him about this incident, he put me off, and fenced, and laughed. I lost my temper, and told him, I thought it extremely *odd*, that the men at the 'Continental' in Paris, had been so casual, and seemed to know him so intimately ; and asked him if he liked low company? And he said '*Yes*,' he did, and he would tell me why, as soon as he had eaten his dinner. Then instead of going to the theater as we intended, we came up here, and he lit a pipe, and calmly informed me, that he was—only a—servant himself ! He was Lord Lochfoyle's valet, returning to England with his lordship's shikar trophies and heavy baggage —his master had gone into Thibet, and did not want—*Rivers !*"

"This is a terrible affair !" exclaimed Mrs. Bonny, whose feelings had driven her to her feet—she was now walking about the room. "What will your uncle say? What did *you* say?"

"Oh, I went off into screaming hysterics—you know how I'm taken,—and they had to send for a doctor, who prescribed absolute quiet, and a sleeping draught. I've not seen *him* since. Oh, what shall I do, Aunt Polly—only think, his father was a greengrocer, and I'm Mrs. Rivers!!"

Alas! every word of this statement was but too painfully true; Rivers happening to overhear a certain conversation at table, had promptly made up his mind to marry the heiress—who was, figuratively speaking, going a-begging,—and thus secure for life, a situation which would bring him in twelve hundred pounds a year. He had taken a passage in the *Salamander*, made the lady's acquaintance, and played his little rôle, with the art of a finished actor. His anxiety to disguise his rank, was one of the most subtle touches in the whole performance. When he did vouchsafe to speak of great people, and their stately places, his infor-

mation was absolutely correct—as acquired from the talk of the housekeeper's room, and the perspective of the servants' hall. The clever insidious scheme of John Charles Rivers was completely successful, he had dangled the outline of a glittering bait before the poor foolish girl, and she had swallowed the hook! Rivers was a practical and clear-headed man, his long acquaintance with the " classes " had bred the familiarity—which savors of contempt. No man was a hero to him, and as for womenkind, they were just so many vain and contemptible dressed-up dolls! Naturally he stood in *no* awe of Mrs. Bonny, and lost no time in seeking an audience with that unhappy lady,—who between the horror at a family *mésalliance*, and fears of her lord's wrath, was in a condition of nervous prostration.

Well aware that the first blow is half the battle, the audacious impostor opened the interview.

" Your niece is my wife," he declared,

when he had bowed, and handed a chair with professional *empressement*, "she is of full age, and married me of her own free will. I admit, that she might have done better—also she might have done worse. I intend to retire from service! we will call it *the* service if you please. I have considerable savings, and propose to take and furnish, a nice place somewhere on the river. I fancy the locality, and we will live like our neighbors. I need not say, that I shall *always* be glad to see you,—or any one of your family."

Here Mrs. Bonny struggled vainly to repudiate the invitation, but the words died away in her throat.

"No one need be made aware of my late profession," he resumed, "not that I am ashamed of it—I was an excellent valet, as my discharges will testify—but now I intend to keep a man myself. As for Myra, you have spoiled her, Mrs. Bonny, she wants a strong hand over her, and that hand," stretching out a small muscular

member, "is *here.* You have all been afraid of her, and allowed her to think and talk only of herself. I guarantee that in twelve months' time, she will think and talk only of *me*"—which same prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter.

And this is the true story of how it came to pass, that Miss Myra Wayne, heiress, did not marry a mere gentleman, but a gentleman's *gentleman !*

THE PROUD GIRL.

A SKETCH IN BLACK AND WHITE.

PART X.

THE first time I ever saw Miss Sheene, was one Saturday afternoon at Hurlingham ; it happened to be a notable occasion for *me*,—and is therefore firmly imprinted on my memory ; for I had never been to the Club before, and it was my eighteenth birthday. To tell the truth, I was not yet "out," but merely a callow schoolgirl from Cheltenham, spending part of my holidays with a smart relative (who persisted in treating me, as if I were still wearing a pigtail). For this reason, I was not presented to any of the agreeable men, or merry matrons, who accosted Aunt Sophy, and stood or sat beside us,—

where we were established on the edge of the polo ground. Luckily the sensation of being "left out in the cold," did not affect me in the smallest degree, in fact, I preferred the rôle of dummy—as it afforded me ample time to gaze about, and take in, my novel, and exciting surroundings. The racing, rushing, polo ponies—who made my heart jump when their hoofs came with a resounding bang against the low wooden partition—the shouting of their captains—the weird wild strains of the Hungarian Band, and last, but not least, the ever-moving crowd of fashionable people. As they sauntered to and fro, I amused myself with making up stories about some of them. For instance, I was most deeply interested in a certain good-looking couple; the man so erect, bronzed, and soldierly, and the girl with a face like a blush rose. Yet she was not as striking, as a tall fair sylph with a willowy figure, whose gait, as she strolled by, was grace itself; a pair of haunting blue eyes, were the chief beauty

of a pale, and somewhat disdainful face, half overshadowed by glorious masses of soft light hair; and country mouse as I was, yet even *I* could discern that that delicate trailing white gown, and plumed hat, had come from Paris! Their wearer looked distinguished, a "somebody," and in my own mind, I labeled her "The Proud Girl!"

"The proud girl," was supported by a stout elderly woman, with an arrogant expression, and no neck; but a scornful head, planted on a squat trunk, loses all its terrors! The lady was attired in embroidered garments of subdued magnificence, and I felt a positive conviction, that she would have preferred to have worn the price emblazoned on her toilet; however the general effect was extremely costly. A dark, rather handsome middle-aged man, walked beside the girl; and I could see, that he was making pitiable, nay, slavish, attempts, to entertain her, and win her approval; also that the damsel barely

listened to him, and received his futile efforts with an air of supercilious forbearance. By and by Aunt Sophy and I moved off towards the house, in order to refresh ourselves with tea and strawberries on the lawn, where we were the guest of a certain Lady Bexhill, who had assembled a party of at least twenty. Among these, to my delight, I descried "the proud girl," and her companions. She happened to sit beside me, and I made her acquaintance over a sugar bowl ; and subsequently a common catastrophe, drew us still closer together ! one of the flying waiters, upset a jug of cream, the contents of which were impartially distributed between her dress and mine. There was a little fuss and lamentation ; a mopping and a wiping. I was secretly on the verge of tears—my best summer dress was ruined,—cream, leaves *such* a greasy stain, and the delicate foulard was done for ! My fellow-sufferer behaved like a heroine—indeed she went farther, and treated the affair as a joke, suf-

fering her slave to wait upon her, and receiving his sympathy, with an air of splendid condescension that filled me with awe and emulation. Should *I* ever dare to speak to a gentleman as if he were a servant? As we walked back to the polo ground together, she informed me, that this was by no means her first visit to Hurlingham, in fact, it was her third season, and she went out a great deal.

"And do you like it?" I inquired rather timidly. I felt profoundly honored, by the notice of this beautiful haughty young princess.

"Oh yes, well enough," she drawled. "It's rather a grind, in hot weather, two or three parties a night, after a day on the river or at Sandown! Auntie," indicating the stout lady waddling in front of us, "enjoys everything. How old are you?" she asked abruptly.

"Eighteen. Eighteen to-day."

"And not out?"

"No"—I admitted shamefacedly—"I'm

going to my father in India. I shall come out there, next cold weather."

"Your first visit to the gorgeous East?"

"No, I was born there."

"So was I," she announced with a little laugh.

"But why do you look so amazed?" she inquired with a lofty air.

"I really don't know," I stammered, "you are so—I can't explain—well—so English—so fair."

"Pray do you expect me to be black because I was born in the East?" she demanded with unexpected irritation.

"No. I am not black myself," I retorted, "and the natives, as well as I can remember,—were pale brown, or even yellow."

"Pale brown, or black, or even yellow! —it's all the same I have the most invincible horror, of darkies, and black blood. You see the man, who *crawls* about after me! He is a Cuban—enormously rich!

He has a tawny grandmother somewhere, —and when his hand touches me—I declare it positively makes me creep ! Ah, here are some people looking for me," and as she spoke, she came to a standstill. "Well, I hope you'll have a good time out in India. Good-by." And with a faint smile, and a bow, I was alone—and my feelings were those of a humble subject who had just been dismissed from the presence of royalty.

An hour later, as my aunt and I trudged down to Parsons Green Station, in order to catch the underground, we were rapidly overtaken by a splendid landau containing "the proud girl," and her relative. The former recognized me, and threw me an affable nod, from beneath her sweeping lace sunshade, whilst her carriage wheels, covered me with clouds of white dust.

"Oh, those are the people we met at tea," exclaimed my chaperone, "enormously rich. The girl is full of ridiculous

airs and graces, and they say, that Mrs. Tappadge, is looking out for a coronet for her! but *she* will only condescend to a duke. She's her adopted daughter, and naturally hated by all the old woman's relations. It was really rather hard on them, when a rich relation brought in a little stranger brat, and established her as her heiress.

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Many months had elapsed since my eighteenth birthday, and I found myself on board the *Socotra*, *en route* for India, carrying with me a large amount of good advice, a suitable outfit—including habits and saddle,—a quantity of parcels for the friends of friends, and the high hopes and benedictions of my relations. I was about to assume the responsible post of housekeeper, and companion to my father,—an Indian civilian of high standing.

The *Socotra* proved to be rather empty; but there were a certain number of military and civilians, hurrying back from

leave; about forty ladies, and among them to my astonishment, I caught sight of "the proud girl." I could scarcely credit my eyes. She looked remarkably pale, slender, and distinguished, and was dressed in deep mourning.

"Ah," she exclaimed, sauntering up to me, "I see you are amazed to find *me* on this ship, and your surprise is nothing to mine. I am so glad to see one face I've met before!"

"Are you alone?" I asked in amazement.

"Yes," she replied, "going out in charge of the captain. And you?"

"I am in charge of Mrs. Charnock, a friend of my father's. I am sorry to see you are in mourning," I added with a glance at her black dress.

"It is for poor Mrs. Tappadge, my adopted mother. Oh, by the way, you may as well know my name—it is Sheene, —Lilias Sheene. As soon as we have settled down, we must have a good talk, and

I will tell you all about myself," and with this unexpected promise, and a wave of her hand, she disappeared into an adjacent cabin. Miss Sheene's "settling down," was evidently a protracted operation, for we were two days at sea before I saw her again.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and the *Socotra* was throbbing her way through a smooth still sea, when Miss Sheene suddenly appeared at my side, and appropriated my arm, and my society.

"So you are going out to your father," she began without further ceremony.

"Yes, and I have not seen him for more than five years——" And I sighed involuntarily.

"But why so lachrymose, my sweet child?"

"Five years is such a long time. I have grown up, and changed—and I'm afraid——"

"Of his being disappointed in your appearance!" she interrupted, with a gay

laugh. "My dear, you need not be uneasy. Your little old-fashioned phiz has never been altered, since you were in pinafores! Now, I've not seen my people for twenty years—think of that! I hope they will not be disappointed in me—or," half to herself, "*I* with them."

"Twenty years," I repeated blankly, "why it will be like beginning life over again."

"Yes, and now I will tell you all about it, for I'm in a talking mood, and I don't feel inclined to go and bore the captain! I'm full of moods, you must know! By the way, are you a good listener?"

"Yes," I replied, "I'd much rather listen, than *talk!*"

"*How* unique! Very well then! Years ago Mrs. Tappadge was in the same little out-of-the-way up-country station, with my parents. Her husband had made an enormous fortune in indigo, and had come out, to look after his affairs, but he and her little girl both died of cholera,

within a few hours of one another, and Mrs. Tappadge was left quite desolate and nearly crazy. My mother took her in, in good old Indian fashion, and did her best to comfort her, but the only thing in which the poor woman found any consolation, was *myself!* I was the exact age of her infant,—and she always declared that there was an extraordinary resemblance between us—in fact, I have gathered, that she sometimes worked herself up to believe, that I was her own child. She could not endure me out of her sight, and of course it ended in her proposing to adopt me, and bring me up as her daughter."

"Yes, and what did your father, and mother say to that?" I demanded.

"Why of course they said *Yes*, like sensible people, for I was the youngest of seven, and my father never was, or *is*, well off. I fancy my mother made some demur, as I was the youngest—the baby, and if Mrs. Tappadge was to be believed, a veritable little angel! with blue, blue eyes

and golden hair, a sort of Christmas card child. Well, Mrs. Tappadge took me to England, and presented me to all her relations as her adopted daughter. You may imagine their enthusiasm! She petted me, and I'm afraid, spoiled me; gave me an excellent education, and every possible indulgence. Only on one subject was she harsh and stern. She would never suffer me to have the smallest intercourse with my own people—it was in the bond, she declared—unwritten, but *binding!* I never wrote to them till within the last year, when I urged, pleaded, insisted, wept, gained permission to write once at Christmas—and—and—they—wrote to me."

Here she paused abruptly, and we continued to pace the deck in a long reflective silence; undoubtedly Miss Sheene was meditating on those letters. We had made three turns to and fro, before I ventured to speak.

"And now, that Mrs. Tappadge is dead,

you are coming back?" I remarked at last. "You are returning to your own people?"

"Yes," she assented with a little start, "my good, kind, adopted mother, died suddenly of apoplexy—her will had not been signed. I have no legal claim, and instead of being the owner of thousands, I am rejoining my family as a mere, well-educated, useless, well-dressed, pauper. Nevertheless I am extremely happy, for after all, there is nothing like one's own flesh, and blood, is there!"

"Have you any conception of what they are like? Did they send their photographs?" I inquired.

"No, I have not the remotest idea of their appearance. Socially they are—middle—middle, class. My father has an appointment on the railway, one of my sisters is married, one is a nurse, two, live at home—so do my two brothers. They write me most affectionate letters.—Of course," here she gave an impatient little

sigh, "they have not had *my* advantages. I've been taken about the world—I've been to Paris and Vienna, and to nearly every 'cure' in Germany. I have been presented at Court, I've had what's called 'a real good time' in Europe, and now, I expect I shall have a 'good time' in Asia! Somehow I'm glad to come back,—like Kipling's soldier 'I can hear the East a-calling,' and I feel, that I am returning home. Oh, I can't tell you, *how* I am longing to see my own mother!"

"Yes, you are lucky," I exclaimed. "*My* mother died, when I was born. How I envy you."

"Do you indeed! And yet you will be socially a whole heaven above me. You are the daughter of a distinguished Indian official! Now my father, has no position whatever. You will walk out of a room before women old enough to be your grandmother. *I* shall be far, far away among the very last joints, of the tag-rag and bob-tail! How strange it will seem," and she

laughed, as if the idea amused her a good deal.

Yes, very strange, most remarkably strange, that I—a little insignificant chit, without air, or grace, should sit aloft in high places as my father's daughter, whilst "the proud girl" languished below the horizon!

"I will teach my sisters,—and they shall teach me. I have a good deal to learn," she resumed after a pause.

"What sort of things?"

"Well, to do my own hair, to sew on buttons, mend my gloves—there will be no more ladies' maids, or French dress-makers for me. Still, I believe that poverty,—the horrid cheap poverty, that has no boot-trees, or new books, is unknown in India, among our class. I'll have an ayah—she will brush my skirts, as well as hair, and mother is sure to have a carriage."

"Oh of course," I assented readily.

"I have heard that in India, even a ser-

geant's wife has a pony cart, no one walks, which is a good thing for *me*. I am so lazy—in fact, I am a lazy, penniless, encumbrance, with all the fastidious tastes, of a rich woman's spoiled child."

"But surely Mrs. Tappadge's relatives have given you money—an income!"

"Oh no—they consider that they have behaved in a most liberal, and truly *Christian* spirit, in presenting me with my passage money, my own clothes, books, and jewelry—as well as fifty pounds,—which by the way, I have laid out in presents for my mother and sisters!"

"What are you taking them?" I inquired, guiltily conscious, that my sole offering to my father, was a pair of slippers!"

"I've got mother an exquisite French tea-gown, so smart, and yet so easy to slip into, it's a perfect dream!"

"But how do you know her size?—it may not fit?" I objected.

"Oh—I think it will be all right—I have

an instinct, that she and I are rather alike —in fact, that I take after *her*. At any rate I've risked the tea-gown !—it is so graceful, all lace and *crêpe de chine*. I've also picked up a perfect duck of a chatelaine, for my married sister."

"I suppose *you* never thought of marrying any one ?" I blundered out.

"Dear me, how alarmingly you put it ?" she exclaimed. "No, but people have thought of marrying *me*. You see, I was a notorious heiress."

"It was not for your money I am certain," I protested with warmth.

"Ah—one should never be certain ; but I must admit, that there were one or two, who were not mercenary."

"For instance, the dark gentleman at Hurlingham ?" I ventured to suggest.

"Oh, I suppose you mean the Count de Hortos ?" she answered with somewhat chilling hauteur. "He was kind, cultivated yes—and charming—but impossible."

"Why impossible?" I urged audaciously.

"Simply because, he is what you have just called him—a dark gentleman. I abhor the shade—and now, that I have walked, and talked, you to death—shall we go below?"

Miss Sheene took me under her protection for the remainder of the passage, and I must confess, that I was secretly flattered by her patronage. We had much in common; we were within a year or two of the same age, we had been born in India, we were fond of music, and we had both before us, an unknown home! Although I was the daughter of a little "Tin God," I was acutely conscious of my inferiority to "the proud girl." I ran all her messages. I felt miserably inferior to this beautiful, tall, graceful creature, with her exquisite clothes, her wide experience, her insolent airs, and her strong prejudices. I was small, dark and insignificant, and alas! the art of dress was a sealed book to

me—I was also shy and desperately diffident. Now Miss Sheene, was possessed of absolute self-reliance, the aplomb of a diplomatist, and the courage of a Zulu warrior. I have seen her snub Mrs. Charnock—my cabin companion—a wiry little woman who had shot tigers,—snubbed her, till she withdrew, cutting a truly pitiable figure. Also, she snubbed all the would-be admiring men,—save one,—who was as cool, and exclusive as herself.

"I really wonder, what you see in that odious half-caste girl?" This remark was made to me by Mrs. Charnock in the privacy of our cabin. "I'm perfectly certain, your father would never tolerate such an intimacy. Now you are on the Indian side, you must think of your position."

"But, Mrs. Charnock, I've not the least notion of what you mean," I protested, "I never met a half-caste girl in all my life."

"Yes, what about Miss Sheene?" she demanded excitedly.

"She is of English birth, and she has a morbid horror of Eurasians."

"Morbid indeed! Why she is one herself! You have only to look at her fingers of a cold morning, and you will see how purple the skin is under her nails —a certain sign—*quite* unmistakable!"

"There are no cold mornings at present," I replied, "and even if your test were proved, I'm perfectly certain that Miss Sheene is a pure European."

"Wonderfully well dressed, with an amazing amount of effrontery I grant you; also an exquisite figure, lithe as a serpent *now*, but in ten years she will resemble an enormous boa-constrictor! All these Eurasians run to flesh. My dear child, I respect you for standing up for your protégée," (it was the other way about, did Mrs. Charnock but know,) "I've been fifteen years in India for my sins, and you really must *allow* me, to recognize a half-caste when I see one! I have heard all about Miss Sheene, an adopted daughter

—left out of a will—it was a shame. On the other hand, she gives herself airs of detestable superiority, talks of Wagner and Ibsen, and book-plates, and first editions, and so on. Her clothes are delicious I grant you, but these Eurasians, have a passion for dress. A girl brought up in a dainty luxurious English home, surrounded by every refinement, to be hurled back into a scrambling squalid family of poor Eurasians—oh what a hell awaits her! Her worst enemy, might *weep* at her fate."

"Mrs. Charnock," I interrupted excitedly, "you don't know Miss Sheene as *I* do—and if you say anything more I shall——" here alas! I burst into tears.

I, though the daughter of a high official, in her husband's province, dared not brave Mrs. Charnock,—at any rate as yet.

"Oh, well, well, don't cry," she said, patting me on the head, "we will drop the subject, and agree to differ, but *some day*, you will find that I am right."

With Mrs. Charock's dire announcement in my ears, I took particular notice of Miss Sheene that evening. She wore a white gown, (since the weather was now tropical,) and she looked as fair, and graceful, as her namesake the lily; in short, considering the matter quite dispassionately, I felt the humbling conviction, that *I* was far more likely to be taken for an Eurasian myself. When later, we sat together in a cool corner of the music-room, Miss Sheene murmured in a dreamy voice—

"In a few days' time, we must say good-by. I wonder what our lives will be like? Shall we compare notes?—will you write to me, if I give you my address, —or, will you forget me in a week?"

"Never, never. I will never forget you," I protested indignantly. "And I will write to you every week, if you care for my letters?"

"Come, come," she exclaimed, "you must not make rash promises, you im-

pulsive child; you have no idea of your father's position, and our paths in life lie far apart. I go north, you go south. I belong to a class, many rungs of the ladder below *you*."

I laughed, and pointed significantly to our reflections in an opposite mirror.

"Oh yes," languidly moving her great gauze fan, "I look very superfine, and dainty, and gilt-edged! I have been pampered in the lap of luxury, and *you* are just a hardy, well-brought-up little girl, unaccustomed to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. On Bombay Bund, we exchange rôles. There, your father will meet you, with half a dozen red and gold chuprassis, and several splendid carriages: but there will be no one to welcome *me*—it is a very long expensive journey up country, and I shall find my way quite easily alone—somehow it will not seem a strange land."

"And yet you remember nothing about it?"

"Nothing but a little wooden painted toy, a figure with a yellow turban, and a red body, with gold spots. Is it not curious, how just a useless little item, sticks in a child's head! and yet she cannot recall the face of her mother."

My father met me in Bombay. He came on board, as soon as the quarantine officer had left, and appeared sincerely glad to see me. He was a grave, reserved sort of man, whom I had always held in great awe,—the awe of the unknown; he kissed me tenderly, and welcomed me to India. There was no one, as she had predicted, to receive Miss Sheene, so I presented her to father as "my particular friend," and we drove her to our hotel, where she consented to share my sitting-room, until our train left that same evening. After tiffin, father went out to Malabar Hill, where he had important business with the Governor, and Miss Sheene and I, were once more tête-à-tête. I scribbled a few lines to send off by the

outgoing mail, and this letter, I myself carried down-stairs, in order to get stamps at the Bureau. As I stood there waiting an enormously fat old woman entered the hall. She was very dark, extremely warm, and appeared to be literally heaving, with suppressed excitement. She wore a large velvet hat covered with roses, a shapeless black costume, covered with dust; in one hand she held a pair of yellow thread gloves, and in the other, a coarse and grimy handkerchief, with which she continually mopped her face.

"Tell me, miss," she said, accosting me eagerly, "have you just come out from England, in the steamer *Socotra?*"

"Yes," I admitted, "we have just arrived."

"Oh, then that's all right!" she resumed. She spoke with a curious foreign accent, clipping her words.

"My daughter—she pronounced it 'datter'—came in the *Socotra*—you will have met her—of course."

I shook my head with unwonted hauteur,—the recently realized dignity of the daughter of a little tin god!

"Oh but yess!—she come out first-class —did you not know Miss Sheene?" and she brandished the gloves imperiously.

"*Miss Sheene!!* Is she your daughter?" I gasped, and I felt as if the hotel hall, was sinking under my feet.

"Oh my yess!—why not? She was taken home to England, and brought up by a friend of mine—now she is coming back, and we are all so glad,—though we are not rich grand folks. My husband has only four hundred rupees per month, but we are a very loving familee, and there's lots of room for Lilias. Oh my! I can tell you, I am longing to see her. Oh my! when I think of my *baby!*"

Her voice had a soft plaintiveness, and hateful discovery! there was a look of Lilias in her gray eyes.

"Where is she?" Mrs. Sheene continued authoritatively—unquestionably

she regarded me as her daughter's keeper.

"She is up-stairs, number thirty-two, but wait one moment," I urged distractedly. Then I flew to the lift, and was instantly whirled aloft, there I tore along the corridor, and dashed open the door of our sitting-room breathless.

Miss Sheene—all unconscious of her doom—was extended at full length on the sofa, absorbed in a little book, which was daintily bound in white and gold. She too, was dressed in a delicate white gown, and wore gold bangles, rings and a pearl and gold chain,—the usual equipment of a young lady of fashion and taste. Oh what a contrast she presented to the woman who had brought her into the world, and whose heavy eager tread, was already in my wake! At all costs I must prepare Lilias, although I felt choking with pity, horror, and excitement.

"Well, what is it, you dear little cyclone?" she inquired languidly. "What

has happened? It is not possible, that you have seen a cobra?"

"No, no," I stammered out, "I only ran up to tell you that—that." I paused—the announcement stuck fast. "That—that——"

"That—that," she repeated, mimicking my voice, "His Excellency the Governor is below, inquiring for Miss Lathom?"

"No—it is your mother," I panted. "She is here—she is coming up now."

Miss Sheene bounded to her feet, flung the book on the table. She had grown white to her lips. "My mother here—to meet me!" and she gave a little sobbing cry.

"She is not—she is—" I began desperately, but the heavy footsteps were now plainly audible, and an extra large shadow loomed on the threshold.—I recoiled several paces, as I caught a glimpse of a gigantic hat.

"*Theese* is number thirty-two," said a voice, and then I opened an opposite door, and fled. I trembled all over, with

the awful and sickening sensation, that the room I thus quitted, was about to become a chamber of horrors. I actually felt as if I were flying from the scene of a murder. For one whole hour, I paced up and down my bedroom in a state of agitation, bordering on a serious illness. At length, I mustered up courage—I ventured forth, —went straight to the door, and rapped timidly. No answer. I turned the handle, and entered with a cautious step and a violently beating heart. But my emotions and fears, were alike wasted and unnecessary; the apartment was empty. Miss Sheene's book lay on the table, a dirty yellow cotton glove lay on the floor, there was a penetrating odor of cocoanut oil—and that was all!

I hurried down to the office, where I was informed, that "the young lady and her 'servant,' had left the hotel about ten minutes previously—the lady had paid for half share of sitting-room,—there was no message for any one,—and no address."

Unfortunately we were pressed for time, and time, to an Indian magnate—who holds the threads of many fates—is of most vital importance,—only for this, I would have implored father to have remained one day—or even half a day,—in Bombay—in order to make inquiries respecting my late fellow-passenger,—but already, a splendid Government carriage, with gorgeous servants in scarlet and gold livery, was in waiting to convey us to the station—we had not a moment to lose! And from that hour to this—the period includes years—and in spite of my determined efforts, and considerable official assistance, I have never been able to discover the faintest trace, of Lilias Sheene!

THE END.

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